

Senior Spotlights



Pictured L to R: Amanda Jones (Portsmouth,) Justyn Taylor (Virginia Beach,) Rachel Hayes (Portsmouth) ; Not Pictured: Elisha Dion (Chesapeake)

Q: What's your first memory of pan?

JT: In fifth grade, we took a field trip to Rhythm Live, and that's where I saw pan and how steel drums sound.

AJ: My first memory of the pan was actually in elementary school, and my music teacher actually had a lead pan. I thought "one day, I want to play that." It just so happened that in middle school, Rachel gave me a pamphlet, and I was like "Yeah! Mom, can I go do this?" That was at auditions for the Junior All-Stars, and ever since then I've been playing.

RH: I actually didn't know what a pan looked like. I didn't know it existed. My brother just played on this thing...I didn't even know what the face of the steel drum looked like until I joined Rising-Stars. Auditions were outside and we all had to switch parts and see which we were best at, and once I found that I was good at cello, I was always on cello because I wasn't tall enough for the bass.

Q: How involved will music and steel drums be in your life after high school?

JT: I plan to improve my music skills, and maybe one year, go down to Trinidad for Panorama maybe.

AJ: Music is always going to be a part of me. I feel that the Lord allowed me to especially have this opportunity with steel pan because not a lot of people get to have this opportunity. It's so unique and different, and I'm really grateful to have played this.

RH: Steel pan has definitely become a part of me. I listen to the music and I play the music. I hope there is still an ensemble with the Navy for me to join. I'll use the talent, the memorization and all the endurance somewhere.

Q: In what ways has Rhythm Project helped you in areas outside of music?

JT: It taught me to play as an ensemble member, sometimes you have to play a certain part to a certain degree that other players can match or fill in.

AJ: I have a lot for that one...The Rhythm Project really challenged me. It challenged me to maintain my endurance and not give up. You're going to learn so many difficult songs, and you're going to do many difficult tasks.

RH: What it taught me most is that if I try to do something long enough and hard enough, I can actually do it. Music is not a natural talent of mine, but I've learned to make it work.

Sponsors



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The Rhythm Project

The Rhythm Project is a world percussion ensemble dedicated to the nurturing of self-esteem through individual and cooperative achievement. Founded in 1996, the program was started in Portsmouth, VA by the Virginia Arts Festival. There are four elementary and middle school Rhythm Project programs that feed the program's premiere performing ensemble, the All-Stars. The All-Stars is a year-round program for high school students that focuses on instilling discipline and dedication in students through performance and touring opportunities. Two high school and two combined high/middle school groups, in addition to the All-Stars, serving the cities of Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Portsmouth, complete the family of nine Rhythm Project ensembles.

The All-Stars, 2009 and 2010 Virginia International PANFest grand champions, have earned international acclaim with their high energy performances over the years. They have opened for Gladys Knight, collaborated with the Girl's Choir of Harlem, and performed at the Royal Nova Scotia and Virginia International Tattoos. In May 2014, the group was featured on NPR's "From the Top" program showcasing outstanding talent in high school students.



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www.RhythmProject.org



Rhythm Report

Greetings Rhythm Project Supporters-

The Virginia Arts Festival's 20th season is upon us, and every department here at the Festival has upped the stakes this year, including the Rhythm Project! In addition to our annual events like Rhythm Live! and PANFest, the All-Stars have taken on a number of extra performance opportunities this spring, and our growing clan of Rising-Stars groups continue to thrive.

In the month of March alone, the All-Stars will be taking on three exciting and unique performances. First will be a collaborative concert with world-renowned steel pan artist Victor Provost and the Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra at George Mason University on March 5th; this is a great opportunity for the All-Stars, not only in expanding their musical understanding of jazz, but also in giving them the opportunity to tour one of Virginia's premier universities for music education. Next, later in the month, we'll go on a weekend trip to perform in New Bern, North Carolina and the next day in Richmond, Virginia for feature performances. We're the featured ensemble in North Carolina, but we'll be sharing the stage with other steel bands from around the area for the Richmond concert. Lots of big opportunities for our program in this busy spring season!

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Dave Longfellow

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Activity Calendar

- Saturday, March 5th, 2016
Caribbean Rhythms—Journey to the Islands
George Mason University Center for the Arts
8PM
- Friday, March 18th, 2016
Community of Excellence Presents The Rhythm Project All-Stars
Grover C. Fields Middle School New Bern, NC
10AM and 12PM
- Saturday, March 19th, 2016
Steel Band Showcase Concert
Lloyd C. Bird High School Chesterfield, VA
7PM
- Thursday, April 21st-Sunday, April 24th, 2016
Virginia International Tattoo
Scope Arena Norfolk, VA
10:30AM (Wed-Fri) & 7:30PM (Thurs-Sun)
- Saturday, May 7th, 2016
Virginia International PANFest
24th Street Oceanfront Park Virginia Beach, VA
10AM-6PM
- Thursday, June 16th
Arts of the Albemarle Concert Series
516 E Main Street Elizabeth City, NC
5:30PM-7PM

Find the Full Schedule online at www.RhythmProject.org





Rhythm Live! Recap

This year's edition of Rhythm Live! turned out to be a bit different from our usual showcase concert. After weeks of preparation, inclement weather the night before the show forced us to reschedule the performance. We ultimately presented a reduction of the program on Sunday evening, without our usual GSA Dance Department accompaniment. Despite the stage being slightly more

sparse than usual, it was an excellent performance by the All-Stars and the GSA African Drummers, and the story of music in Trinidad was still told. Highlights from the show included our rousing performance of Gioachino Rossini's "The Barber of Seville Overture" as well as our pop selection for this year, The Weeknd's "Can't Feel My Face."

"You guys must have done something very right because in my time here at Fort Monroe, and over all the concerts we've had, this is the first time I've seen a standing ovation! Thanks you for being great!"

Taps Off

It's been five years since the Rhythm Project All-Stars have performed at the Virginia International Tattoo. Considering that this year is the Virginia Arts Festival's 20th anniversary season, and that we will be bidding farewell to a lot of great senior players this spring, we thought it was perfect timing to bring the All-Stars back to be part of the show in April. It will involve a bit more choreography than we've been accustomed to, but the group is going to make a big splash at the Tattoo this year. You will also be seeing the All-Stars at the Hullabaloo events, as well as the ever-popular "drumline battle." The students are beyond excited to be in the show—almost as excited as they are to be missing a few days of school—in order to provide students throughout Hampton Roads with amazing 2016 Virginia International Tattoo matinee performances.



Portsmouth Rising-Stars

Over the past 8 months, the Portsmouth Rising-Stars has returned as a prominent program of the Rhythm Project's feeder ensembles. The Rhythm Project originated in Portsmouth in 1996. After a few venue and personnel changes, we found ourselves without a functional RP group in Portsmouth for a few years. That has all changed this year; what started as a small summer program paved the way for the Portsmouth Rising-Stars to regain momentum this past fall with our great partners at the Portsmouth Art & Cultural Center. With one performance already under their belt, this group consisting of grade- and middle-schoolers has started off with a bang. We look forward to the month of May when this ensemble will get to perform at the MacArthur Mall on May 1st, and make their return to PANFest on May 7th.



PANFest

The spring of 2016 is flying by at high speeds, and that means that the 14th annual Virginia International PANFest is right around the corner. This year's festival should mark a record number of Rhythm Project performers, correlating with the growth of our many bands. In addition to our strong representation from Hampton Roads, we expect the usual great turnout from the Southeastern United States and nearby islands. Joining us as the headlining performers will be the Northern Illinois University steel band, a strong program led by famous pan player

Liam Teague. This band's appearance presents a powerful opportunity for young high school-aged steel drum enthusiasts. Being one of the only places in the world that allows a student to earn a degree in steel drum performance, Northern Illinois is an important pillar of steel drum education in the United States, and we hope to bridge the gap between them and the many potential pan students that attend our wonderful festival!



"After 5 years of playing steel drums for the Festival under exceptional directors, I have grown as a musician and have gained valuable experiences and knowledge that will last a lifetime."