THE COLTRANE LEGACY EDUCATION PROJECT
& PILOT PROGRAM

“Music For Life!”

Consistent with its outreach mission, the Coltrane Home is developing programs for schools and the local community to help

- Encourage the active participation in music making, creativity and personal expression to empower young and old
- Expand the music appreciation of the Coltranes, Jazz and diverse musical cultures, and the awareness of the Coltranes’ legacies of promoting goodwill, tolerance, and mastery
- Educate and help educators to develop necessary skills to foster the above

A prime goal of The Coltrane Home -- ‘inspire people of all ages and backgrounds to participate in the joy of making of music, and the creative process’ – Alice Coltrane

Charged with this responsibility, the Coltrane Legacy Education Project was formed to develop an outreach program that could meet these goals. Over several years of research, meetings and vision sessions with music educators, directors and musicians, discussions with students, and conversations with the Coltrane family, a list of action items has been developed. The first step in this process is the development of an educational curriculum initiated by undertaking and assessing several pilot project activities and workshops. Also anticipated are workshops targeted to educators themselves to assist them in learning the skills necessary to foster creativity, competence and appreciation of this music in their students – something not conventionally taught in the collegiate music education programs most educators have been trained in.

It is hoped that many of these creativity-fostering skills can increasingly be integrated in many, if not all music classes, and that the majority of the teaching skills will become familiar generally to music educators.
Workshops. Presentations. Performances.

The Need

In conversations with students, teachers, and parents, the need for a more creative music experience is seen as something that could be highly beneficial to students of all ages, particularly in light of the rapidly increasing awareness of the importance of fostering creativity as key life skills. While the existing music framework in schools offers considerable opportunities for students to develop a range of skills, the creative process and personal expression, whether through improvisation or composition or simply playing, is often neglected, perhaps compromising potential development. And even as some diversity of musical forms has been introduced in schools, the considerable diversity of modern society on Long Island, combined with the inter-connectedness of the digital world has opened up a world of wonderful musical exposure and opportunities not often experienced or embraced in the classroom. Of considerable concern, too, is the significant percentage of students who, after years of musical study, give up playing music during after high school, instead of making the active participation in music a lifelong, joyful experience.

Listening and Personal Expression, Conversation and Creativity, Building Tools for Empowerment.

*Coltrane Legacy Education Project* seeks to offer a significant enhancement to a young person’s music experience. “Music for Life!” is a key concept of the Legacy Education Project. Beginning with the pilot classes, the curriculum seeks to promote the creativity and personal expression of students, while helping to cultivate some of the important skills and knowledge, yet in keeping with the evolving learning (i.e. “Common Core” and other) standards. Seeing music as the common language, the program engages students to participate in musical dialogue – a “conversation” -- often through improvisation and composition, in an environment that encourages active listening, participation and collaboration. It teaches rhythm as an underpinning to understanding and creating music, and also time-keeping. It uses voice – a student’s most facile instrument -- in addition to instruments. It builds listening skills, and appropriate response and conversation, creativity and collaboration.

All in all, it encourages students to experience the joy of making music and confidence in self-expression, and seeks to encourage music as a lifelong endeavor.

Currently available as single or multi-session classes and camps, a variety of modules is being developed to provide a flexible series of options that can be tailored to most any educational environment of a normal classroom size or smaller, whether in-class programs, after schools programs, or programs at outside venues including libraries, music schools, and festival and other events . Programs can be tailored to meet the needs of specific age groups, including seniors, certain special needs students, veterans struggling with PTSD, and groups seeking to promote tolerance.

Reaching the African-American Community and other economically challenged areas. Often the first to suffer severe budget cuts, communities of color are often critically deprived of opportunities to both discover and celebrate much of their own art and musical history in the classroom. Moreover, the music education provided is often not relevant to the interest of the young, and generally not taught in a way
that instills interest, creativity, or encourages lifelong pursuit. The Legacy Education Project commits to try work to help the teaching in school districts requesting assistance, and encourages them to embrace and integrate the rich cultural traditions often left to be learned strictly outside the school.

A Project Drawing Upon Musicians, Educators and Key Partnerships

The Project will evolve its curriculum over time, and continually seek out and draw upon the best models of classroom, after-school, and non-school-based programs currently being implemented. Helping to guide this process is a growing team of outstanding educators, musicians, and facilitators, both locally and nationally. In addition to ongoing input from administrators, educators and musicians, The Coltrane Home is assembling an Education Advisory Committee comprised of high-profile educators and nationally-recognized musicians and others to provide additional technical capacity and funding assistance.

Making Connections. “Relevance” is an essential component to making music accessible, especially to students. Asking people to willingly participate in the making of music means working at times within the forms of music familiar to the student -- whether rock, rap, electronic. Equally important, particularly when trying to communicate the importance of John Coltrane and other essential contributors to music is creating the linkage between the music of Coltrane and the music that’s currently enjoyed by the students. Fortunately, John Coltrane has been acknowledged publically by many of the well-known musical artists of the current and past generations of music lovers. Students are much more receptive to this information when they can see that some of their favorite artists are on the continuum and tradition that John Coltrane -- and his wife, Alice -- have been such an important part of.

Empowering girls and young women through The Alice Coltrane Project. The visible shortage of women performers playing drums, electric guitar, and numerous other bandstand instruments provides a poor model for girls and young women who might seek similar areas of participation and expression as their male counterparts. While women are having an increasing role in many music genres, engaging girls and young women in the creative and conversational music process can only improve confidence and life skills. Alice Coltrane’s rise to great influence in the jazz world as both a music pioneer introducing new music forms as well as a respected and master musician on piano, organ and harp, presents an inspiring model.

The Legacy Education Project sees the critical import of supporting and encouraging girls and women to immerse themselves in the musical creative process, personal expression, and communication to feel equally equipped as boys and young men to express themselves through all available pathways, without restriction. The Alice Coltrane Project is in its infancy, but will play an increasingly important role in the organization.

Performances. Besides the enormously popular Coltrane Day Music Festival, which attracts thousands of music lovers, musicians, and music students, through The Coltrane Home, various performances can be arranged involving professional musicians who can articulate the Coltrane message through word
and music. Please contact us with information about special performances and workshops for your environment.

“Educate the Educators” is another critical goal to our efforts. One of the greatest potential assets to assist the goals of the organization is the extraordinary talent of music educators currently in the public and private school system. Most of these educators are deeply committed to helping their students develop a strong knowledge and love of music, and achieve high levels of proficiency on their instruments. Unfortunately, however, based upon extensive input from educators and students, the vast majority of existing school programs are focused on technical proficiency and performance, rather than the creative expression, interactivity, and love of music-making.

Moreover, most educators are not trained in the creative elements of music-making. With the exception of those who have focused on composition or jazz improvisation, creative expression, either through the development of improvisation skills, composition, group rhythmic participation and drumming, and even creative dance, is seldom part of the degreed programs at music performance or education programs at colleges. Many classically trained musicians and music educators are actually highly uncomfortable participating in improvisation, let alone teaching these skills to their students. Ironically, many of the greatest classical musicians were skilled improvisers, and composition historically was enthusiastically encouraged and patronized prior to the 20th Century. The good news is that once even classically trained and improvisation-averse educators develop their skills, they can communicate effectively to their students and their own creativity can increase.

Participation by music educators in the pilot classes will be an important aspect of the development of the Pilot program and curriculum. However, in addition to the Pilot classroom programs, drawing upon some of the best ideas and programs currently in existence, the Legacy Education Project will use workshops, conferences, and other methods on an ongoing basis to help educators improve improvisational and creativity-enhancing skills and increase their comfort in bringing these and other creative elements to the classroom. It will seek to do so in a fashion that helps them conform to the new Common Core and Learning Standards so central to the new education environment.

Over the coming years, expanding this professional development component through workshops and other events will be an important undertaking. The organization is currently prepared to partner with local and regional educators to move this forward.

Developing Partnerships. The Coltrane Home and the Legacy Education Project continues to seek to establish partnerships and develop a network with other music and education institutions and arts organizations, both locally, regionally and even nationally, seeking to find synergies, sharing resources, and incorporating models and tools that are successfully being employed by others. Early relationships include several school districts, the East End Arts Council, BOCES, LI Council of the Arts (various), Arts in Education, Jazz at Lincoln Center and others.
Who Were John and Alice Coltrane?

John Coltrane, an African-American musician who lived with his wife and fellow musician, Alice Coltrane, on Long Island, was one of the most significant contributors to music internationally in the 20th century. A renowned musician and composer, Coltrane’s musical influences are reflected around the world, and many of the world’s foremost musicians and composers, from Jazz, to Neo-Classical, Funk, Rock, and Hip-hop, have been strongly influenced by Coltrane’s work. Coltrane, moreover, was inspired by and drew from a broad range of musical cultures, including Indian, African, Latin, European, and here in the US, blues and church music, to create music that, in turn, has inspired millions of listeners and musicians through the years. Indeed, it can be argued that, among the many great musicians who have made their homes on Long Island over the last 100 years, none have been more influential than John Coltrane.

“I want to be a force for good.” Coltrane’s stated message reflected his appreciation of the power of music to positively influence others and a sense of his responsibility to use his talents to do so. His embracing of diversity, his love of life, and his deep spirituality are all evidenced in the language of his work. In fact, it was his mission to foster tolerance, peace, love, and express both the beauty and pain of human existence through his music. His message of universal goodwill rings as important today as ever, and it is hoped that some of this message can be conveyed in our programming.

Alice Coltrane, John’s wife, was a master musician in her own right. A tremendous piano and organ player, she is widely regarded as one of the greatest – if not the greatest – jazz harpist in history. Moreover, in a world largely dominated by males, Alice made a tremendous contribution to the music genre, integrating Indian music styles and spiritual music into her broad palette, and influenced many musicians, most notably Carlos Santana, who worked closely with her.

The Coltrane Home in Dix Hills, where John and Alice Coltrane lived with their children, received historic landmark designation status, and is the location where John Coltrane composed his most significant and influential opus, “A Love Supreme.” The Home is currently undergoing extensive renovation, and will be developed into a museum, archive and research center, and center for educational outreach.

The Pilot Programs

Multiple programs are available for different environments, and programs can be tailored to meet the needs of an institution, whether a school, arts camp, local event, library or other venue, and across a range of ages. At this time, programs for two broad age groups have been the focus: “Creative Expression And...Coltrane?”, for Ages 5-8, and “Music and the Creative Process”, Ages 11-18. Led by skilled performers/facilitators, each program emphasizes the understanding of rhythm, melody, improvising and music making through a process of performance and extensive student participation. Each also fosters appreciation for the jazz music of Coltrane, but other diverse styles as well, such as blues, funk – even rap, and the awareness of music as language. Above all, the programs are designed to be fun, and provide a less performance-pressured environment, and encourage greater creative exploration. The more advanced program can be tailored for both musicians and non-musicians alike.
Through the tailoring of different modules, the programs offer considerable flexibility and can be made suitable for all ages and level of musical exposure and knowledge. In addition, classes can be one-time, one-period events, sequential over a period of weeks, or be used in after-school or weekend environments. We feel that it would be beneficial to do a sequence of several classes, however.

The Advanced program can also be targeted to more experienced student musicians looking to develop greater comfort, creativity and expression in improvisation.

**Musician workshops** are another tool that the Legacy Education Project will be bringing to music students (and event adults) in the region. Drawing upon an abundant resource of extraordinary professional music talent, programs targeted to music students are intended to encourage them to explore music on the stage, inspire them to further develop their skills, and experience the joy of playing with master musicians. These programs can be initiated simultaneously with the Pilot Education programs.

**Scholarship Programs.** Alice Coltrane expressly requested that we make an effort to develop programs to help those highly talented music students who, lacking the financial means, can participate in advanced music training. Accordingly, the Legacy Education Project seeks to develop scholarship programs over time to help talented students in need.

**Interactive Music Appreciation Programs** – including “Conversations”. Intended to raise awareness regarding John and Alice Coltrane and provide inspiration, these programs are designed for students, teachers and the general population alike. These jazz and Coltrane-centric music appreciation classes will be made available at schools, libraries and other appropriate venues to offer music lovers an opportunity to better understand Jazz and the influences and considerable importance of John and Alice Coltrane to music history.

These programs can be included with, or provided separately to the Pilot education project. Our “Conversations” programs include a number of experts who speak to various important areas regarding the Coltranes and their impacts, with extensive Q&A. Film, live music, and other elements can be included in these programs.

**Teacher Involvement and Assessment**

As one of the important goals is to encourage the incorporation of many of these tools in the regular music teaching-learning classroom experience, we strongly encourage teachers and aides to observe, and even participate in the class. We hope, ultimately, to help teachers further develop these skill via workshops and other educator-focused programs, but a considerable amount of very useful and immediately applicable knowledge can be developed by merely observing and participating in these Pilot classes.
Assessing the effectiveness of these classes is an essential part of the Pilot Program process. After each class, the program leaders would want to discuss observations about the experience, and share thoughts and ideas that might improve the program.

Educate the Educators. Hosting the first in a series of Educate the Educators workshops is one of our goals over the coming 12 months. As expressed previously, getting educators and administrators more comfortable with the creative process, particularly developing improvisational and compositional skills (across all musical styles – from Jazz, to Folk, Rock, Hip-Hop and others), is essential to building an infrastructure that can encourage the creative music and art process among students and improve music and life outcomes.

**We are happy to connect with music educators and music and art administrators and directors to discuss how the Coltrane Home’s Legacy Education Project can benefit students and educators alike.**

For more information, please contact:

Ron Stein, Pres.
*Project Coordinator*

**The Coltrane Legacy Education Project**

**631 223-1361**

rstein@thecoltranehome.org

[www.thecoltranehome.org](http://www.thecoltranehome.org)