

Visual & Performing Arts District Advisory Committee (VAPA DAC)

April 30, 2025 – **in-person**

Board Room, SMMUSD District Office, 1717 - 4th Street, Santa Monica 90401

MINUTES

Attendees: Janis Gabber, Zina Josephs, Aimee Koeplin, Rebecca Terlizzi, Michael Mollo, Bertha Roman, Dr. Jim Wang, Tom Whaley

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM by Co-Chair Janis Gabbert.
2. Approval of minutes from the February meeting was tabled.
3. Calendar review – The June 4 Kiwanis solo competition winner performances at JAMS was added as well as some of the audition dates.
4. Introduction of the new VAPA Coordinator for 2025-26, Dr. Jim Wang – Dr. Wang was director of orchestras at Lincoln Middle School from 2011 to 2020, and then director of orchestras at Samohi. He will begin shadowing Tom Whaley on May 5. He earned his master's and DMA at USC's Thornton School of Music. His 2023 dissertation was entitled "Music education in a post-pandemic world: Motivators for the retention of music students."
5. Staff Liaison and VAPA Coordinator Tom Whaley
 - a. Stairway -- Lydia Muraro produced for the last time. Due to rain the day before, the dress rehearsal could not be held at the Greek Theatre, so the concert was moved into Barnum and pivoted to three separate concerts at 3 PM (Band), 5 PM (Orchestra), and 7 PM (Choir). Despite restrictions on PCH, a few Malibu students were able to participate. The mariachi program made its debut, and the concerts brought in the largest revenue ever. The total cost is about \$60,000, and the district donates \$35,000. Moving the concert indoors saves about \$12,000 in sound equipment rental.
 - b. The press release just went out for the May 17th Mexico Magico festival.
 - c. The Samohi Symphony and Chamber Orchestra performed at Disney Hall in the "Mahlerthon" concerts and received a glowing review in the *L.A. Times*.
 - d. Samohi choir ensembles toured during spring break and won honors.
 - e. The Samohi Chamber Orchestra performed in Boston over spring break.
 - f. The Samohi Wind Ensemble tour of the United Kingdom during spring break included a master class in Manchester and performances in Edinburgh, Manchester, and the Royal College of Music in London. The London concert was reviewed:
"Santa Monica High School Wind Ensemble & Regent Brass"
4/13/25 -- 4 Bars Rest (London)

<https://www.4barsrest.com/reviews/concerts/con872.asp>

An ambitious trans-Atlantic link brings a welcome non-tariff export of musical excellence to London. London's concert scene rarely offers high-quality concerts without charge (tariff or otherwise), making this collaborative evening between the Santa Monica High School Wind Ensemble (known colloquially as Samohi) and Regent Brass at the Royal College of Music especially noteworthy.

Known for its outstanding music department which involves over 300 students performing in jazz, marching, and concert bands, Samohi is Santa Monica's flagship ensemble, with this impressively delivered programme under conductor Kevin McKeown concluding a UK tour which included successful performances in Edinburgh and Manchester...

Vaughan Williams' lushly textured *'Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis'* resonated gloriously, showcasing the ensemble's dynamic control and tonal balance...Philip Sparke's technically challenging *'The Year of the Dragon'* was confidently executed, with the brass section particularly impressive. The third movement's complex woodwind passages displayed agile technique, contrasting the ensemble's refined sound in the more lyrical central section. The composer was also present in the audience, adding special significance to the evening...

The world-renowned clarinetist Julian Bliss, delivering a stunningly expressive rendition of the *'Blues'* from Gershwin's *'An American in Paris'*...Closing selections from *'La La Land'* and a Beatles medley... provided a joyful finale. This transatlantic musical partnership offered an uplifting showcase of talent, thoughtful programming, and inspirational leadership, deserving praise for delivering such accomplished performances...."

Kevin McKeown also participated in a "Global Bandroom" podcast.

g. The Kiwanis awarded scholarships in 9 categories at the Santa Monica and Malibu Art Shows in April.

h. The Samohi Jazz Band concert on June 5 will include Stanley Clarke. A possible tour of Japan next year is being explored.

i. New risers have been purchased for Edison and McKinley, and an improved storage space for the Fazioli concert grand piano at Barnum is being discussed.

j. Pali High Theatre used the Humanities Center at Samohi for "Legally Blonde."

k. Pali High and Samohi Winter Color Guard joined for the season and placed 2nd in competition.

l. Samohi Theatre under Kate Barraza hosted the DTASC Shakespeare Festival for the first time. (Drama Teachers Association of Southern California)

- m. Measure R funding requests were discussed at a recent Board of Education meeting. The May 13 BOE agenda showed \$14,500,000 annual revenue from Measure R.
- n. Tom's retirement party is planned for June 1.

- 6. Neither of the Board Liaisons was able to attend the meeting.
- 7. Prop 28 – Austin Beutner is suing LAUSD for firing and then rehiring teachers as “new.”
- 8. DAC Year-end Report – New information added since the Mid-Year Report was reviewed.
- 9. DAC vacancies were discussed. While the district advertises vacancies on the Facilities and Financial DACs, the rest of the DACs seem to be neglected.
- 10. Calendar of upcoming performances and art exhibits -- Information was added about the May 17th “Mexico Magico” and “Jazz at the Ranch” performances, as well as the June 7th Kiwanis performances and the fact that Stanley Clarke and the Samohi Chamber Orchestra will be included in the June 5 Jazz Band concert.
- 11. Public comments regarding items not on the agenda – None.
- 12. Agenda planning for May 21 meeting – Review and approve Year-end Report.
- 13. The meeting adjourned at 8:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Zina Josephs, Secretary, and Rebecca Terlizzi, Vice Chair