

# Unique concert will celebrate Ben Franklin

By Maribeth Conway

Composer Christopher Kies says that musicians have a thing for marking round numbers with music. Take Mozart, for example. This year is the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth, a nice round number, so musicians are using the birthday as an excuse to get together and play music.

Lucky for Franklin residents, Benjamin Franklin's 300th birthday is this year as well.

About two to three years ago Kies realized that the 300th anniversary of Franklin's birth was approaching. As a way to celebrate the event – and provide some Franklin students with a unique opportunity – Kies decided to compose a tribute to Ben Franklin that will be played by musicians from Franklin High School and the University of New Hampshire.

As someone who respects Franklin's wit and genius, Kies said, "I figured someone should do something."

Kies a music professor at UNH, said in an interview Wednesday that he did not even know Franklin, Mass. was on the map until a few years ago.

It was then that he met Janet Fleck, a former UNH music student and Franklin native, through the school's music program.

He could not help but take note of Fleck while she was studying at UNH because of her excellence in playing the flute.

Kies said that Fleck, currently a Franklin music teacher, was one of the school's most talented players.

Through his friendship with Fleck he got to know her family – a family of musicians.

Fleck's two sisters, brother, parents, and even her grandparents are "not sort of good, but very good musicians, and as a musician you can't help but notice that," he said.

His admiration for the family grew, and with that also grew his knowledge of and appreciation for

Franklin. He continuously learned of new UNH-Franklin connections between students and alumni and grew to respect the town that was named after Benjamin Franklin.

Also noteworthy, he said, is the Franklin school music program, "top to bottom, the teachers are good, the students are energized, the parents are supportive" he said.

Kies thought of no better way to engage the two communities than to write a piece of music for UNH to play along with students from the Franklin schools.

He believed this could provide a positive opportunity on both ends: the event would give Franklin students a chance to play with college-level musicians, which in turn might make them think of the UNH music program when making their college choices.

With the aid of a grant provided by UNH, the Franklin High School Wind Ensemble, Orchestra and Select Chorus, along with 44 students from UNH, will all perform Kies' original piece "Franklin Portrait" at the Horace Mann Middle School Auditorium next Friday, April 7 and then again Saturday, April 8 at the Johnson Theater at UNH.

In a piece inspired by the written works of Benjamin Franklin, Kies has composed what he believes to be a successful combination of narration and music that attempts to give life to Franklin.

Similar to composer Aaron Copland's "Lincoln Portrait," also an orchestral piece with narration, the "Franklin Portrait" is intended to be far less serious and more reflective of Franklin's humorous nature.

Though Franklin was only an amateur musician, he was enthusiastic about music and he certainly had musical instincts, Kies said.

Franklin discussed music frequently in his writings and with great perspective, according to Kies. Kies described some of the work written by Franklin as "the kind of

talk you would expect from a professor of music, if they had the time."

Nine to ten of Franklin's works are cited in the piece, which equates to about half of the 35 minute composition.

"The Drinker's Dictionary", "Dialogue Between the Gout and Mr. Franklin" and "Poor Richard's Almanack" are all cited in "Franklin Portrait."

In addition to narration from Franklin's writings, Kies has included well-known music from Franklin's time period, the eighteenth century.

A rare instrument which Franklin invented, the glass armonica will also be featured, played by Alisa Nakashian-Holsberg, a musician specializing in the armonica.

The glass armonica produces musical sounds by touching moistened fingers to spinning glass.

It was a very popular instrument in Franklin's day, and composers such as Mozart and Beethoven even wrote works for the instrument.

The popularity of the glass

armonica dove sharply when many armonica musicians fell violently ill and linked their illness to the instrument.

Some even theorized that the armonica had magical powers.

Today many believe that it was the lead which was often used in the paint of the glass that caused the illness by being absorbed through the damp fingers of the musicians.

The armonica performance, along with the collaborative effort of students and faculty from the two schools is a rare opportunity and is bound to make for a great performance, said Nancy Schoen, director of music for Franklin schools.

She is thrilled with the learning experience this has provided the students – to work with a contemporary composer on the premier of an original piece of music.

Performances will be held at the Horace Mann Middle School Auditorium next Friday, April 7 at 7:30 p.m. and again Saturday, April 8 at 8 p.m. at the Johnson Theater at UNH. For more information, visit [www.franklinmusic.org](http://www.franklinmusic.org).

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Here is this week's programming lineup for Channel 96, Franklin Public Educational Access Channel

**Friday, March 31**  
4:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.: Through School House Window  
5 p.m. to 6 p.m.: Horace Mann Middle School Concert  
6 p.m. to 8 p.m.: Parmenter School Variety Show  
8 p.m. to 8:16 p.m.: FHS Cro Country Highlights  
8:16 p.m. to 8:38 p.m.: Panther Pride Night  
8:38 p.m. to 9:12 p.m.: Tour the Nysted Wind Farm in Denmark

**Saturday, April 1**  
3:30 p.m. to 4:11 p.m.: Ne Senior Center Info  
4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Scho Committee Replay  
8:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Parmenter School Variety Show

**Sunday, April 2**  
6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Parmenter Scho Variety Show

## Hours for Gerry

Gerry's Place, the student-operated restaurant in Tri-Count Regional Vocational Technical High School, has announced its calendar through April 27. The restaurant open each day school is in session from 11:15 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

Dates to note in April are: Apr

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