



# The Melody Project: Free After-School Musical Education

Seeking \$25,000 to create a free space for students to enjoy creating music in Lynn, MA

Victoria Bourque  
19 DECEMBER 2018

Victoria Bourque – Program Coordinator  
[vbourque@umass.edu](mailto:vbourque@umass.edu) | 978-501-1568

19 December 2018

Anya Nykyforiak  
National Endowment for the Arts  
Art Works  
400 7th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20506-0001

Dear Ms. Nykyforiak,

It is with great pleasure that I submit to you this grant proposal for the Melody Project, a program to create more accessible musical education in Lynn, Massachusetts. The purpose of this proposal is to elucidate the reader on the significant advantages that musical education brings to people of all ages and outline the plan for an after-school program that gives an opportunity to children of any background to learn about and participate in music, thus improving their social, academic, and, of course, musical skills. For this program to become a reality, we would need a grant of \$25,000 to match the existing donation of \$25,000 from the D'Addario Foundation for this program to come to life.

As I explain in my proposal, I have a great deal of expertise in this area and I am confident in both the necessity and success of such an undertaking. Having attended a number of music schools, both as a student and an assistant teacher for several different instruments, I have a great deal of experience in the field of musical education. Over the years, it has become extremely clear that musical education is in high demand but is simply unavailable to countless students due to the high cost associated with it. I also have filled several roles as an assistant teacher—being one of the “big kids” helping the younger ones—and I know how much that helped me, as well as the other children who participated in such programs, grow and learn how to communicate and be responsible. The Melody Project seeks to bring musical education to children at no cost, allowing them to enjoy the social and academic benefits of group music after the school day from Monday to Thursday, every week.

Another advantage of such a program would be the opportunities it offers older students who are professionally pursuing music, allowing them to approach musical education from an instructor standpoint. Volunteers could help our program thrive while also adding to their own resumes in the competitive music industry.

I think a musical program like the one proposed here would be incredibly useful to the children of Northeastern Massachusetts—especially those in lower income communities such as Lynn. The Melody Project would bring the invaluable benefits of music to countless students who do not have the same opportunities as their more privileged peers.

If you have any questions or thoughts about the program I am proposing, call me at (978) 501-1568 or email me at [vbourque@umass.edu](mailto:vbourque@umass.edu).

Thank you for your time and attention,

Victoria Bourque

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# 1. Statement of Need

A great demand for education in art grows stronger every year as more and more people realize the value of creative expression. Musical education has repeatedly been proven a vital piece of many children's development and health, whether that be mental or even physical; "Everyday listening skills are stronger in musically trained children," leading to improvements in "brain processing" and even "higher [...] standardized test scores."<sup>1</sup> Research clearly demonstrates that adults who engaged consistently in music at young ages show greater "robust brainstem responses to sound" as well as greater "creativity, teamwork, communication, and critical thinking" skills.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, since music is something many people enjoy that does not require a necessarily academically-inclined streak, musical education is a way to keep students in school or at least off the streets, even in lower income or generally rougher communities.

Unfortunately, musical education in schools is abominably underfunded. Much like most arts, music is one of the first programs to be cut in schools, incorrectly seen as a luxury rather than a necessity, unlike the sciences. Moreover, musical education is incredibly hard to access outside of a government-funded program like public school. Private or even group musical lessons cost students (or their parents) hundreds of dollars a month, not to mention the high costs of a decent quality musical instrument. Thus, with the societal understanding that music is

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<sup>1</sup> "Music Research - Kids." *NAMM Foundation*, 2018, [www.nammfoundation.org/why-music-matters/music-research-child](http://www.nammfoundation.org/why-music-matters/music-research-child).

<sup>2</sup> "Music Research - Adults." *NAMM Foundation*, 2018, [www.nammfoundation.org/why-music-matters/music-research-adults](http://www.nammfoundation.org/why-music-matters/music-research-adults).

just an extra treat, rather than a potentially core piece of an individual’s mental or even physical health, many children are deprived of an experience that could truly change their lives for the better, with almost no cons apart from the extreme cost.

Many areas in America are in dire need of art education programs—particularly ones that are accessible to all—but we must start somewhere, so we have decided to start close to home for this project. Lynn is one of the poorest cities in Massachusetts, despite being the ninth largest municipality in the state. Although it was one of the first American communities to create specific reservations for the public good, the current state of the city does not allow for many publically funded opportunities, resulting in a dearth of accessible arts and entertainment, which is seen as a luxury, let alone in educating students to become adept in creating their own arts and entertainment.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 1. Students enjoying the benefits of School of Rock education in Wichita, KS. Retrieved from [www.schoolofrock.com](http://www.schoolofrock.com).

A quick search of the available music lessons in the Lynn area reveals that, though they exist, they are limited and expensive. “School of Rock Lynn,” the most significant music school

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<sup>3</sup> “Lynn Woods Historic District.” *National Park Service*, 2018, [https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/massachusetts\\_conservation/lynnwoods.html](https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/massachusetts_conservation/lynnwoods.html)

in the area, offers beginner lessons (1 private lesson and 1 group lesson per week) for a variety of instruments, like guitars and vocals, starting at around \$225 a month, but when one tries to peruse any lessons for non-beginners, the website directs you to “School of Rock Wichita,” which is situated in Kansas and is thus inaccessible to Lynn students.<sup>4</sup> One can also find a variety of private music teachers online in the area, but this situation is not ideal either; the top rated teacher in the area is incredibly busy and charges more based on travel fee (though his starting price is \$35, presumably per hour, which is less than many of the other teachers in the area), or might instead just teach a student over the Internet. While this technology is better than nothing, in-person lessons are considerably more helpful for students at all levels.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, isolating students into taking one-on-one lessons all the time keeps them from one of the fundamental benefits of musical education, which is learning to listen to others—not only when playing music together, but also when communicating about what you want to do, which is a life skill that is required of all humans.

Bringing musical education to Lynn—and alleviating the greatest factor that works against it: cost—would allow many more students to not only create and music but also engage with peers and hone in on motor skills and enjoy all the benefits that come with music without the struggles that people associate with it.

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<sup>4</sup> “Explore School of Rock; Lynn.” *School of Rock Lynn*, 2018, <https://locations.schoolofrock.com/lynn>. Seibenmark, Jerry. “School of Rock Opens on South Rock Road.” *The Wichita Eagle*, 2012, <https://www.kansas.com/news/business/article1091189.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Grether, Paul. “PGrether private music lessons.” *Thumbtack*, 2018, [https://www.thumbtack.com/ca/covina/music-lessons/guitar-instruction?category\\_pk=122675560366571820&lp\\_request\\_pk=345834394981826575&zip\\_code=01901&lp\\_path=%2Finstant-results%3Fcategory\\_pk%3D122675560366571820%26zip\\_code%3D01901&click\\_origin=pro%20list%2Fclick%20pro%20name&urgency\\_signal=popular](https://www.thumbtack.com/ca/covina/music-lessons/guitar-instruction?category_pk=122675560366571820&lp_request_pk=345834394981826575&zip_code=01901&lp_path=%2Finstant-results%3Fcategory_pk%3D122675560366571820%26zip_code%3D01901&click_origin=pro%20list%2Fclick%20pro%20name&urgency_signal=popular)

## 2. Statement of Request

We are asking the National Endowment for the Arts to match a previous donation of \$25,000 to create the Melody Project, a program in Northeastern Massachusetts—particularly centered in Lynn—that will provide access to free musical education to local students. Since the Art Works program focuses on “projects that celebrate our creativity... invite mutual respect... and enrich humanity,” we think this project fits in perfectly with the NEA’s message.

This program would consist of weekly group lessons featuring guitars, keyboards, and vocals so students will be able to collaborate and create music that they are familiar with and can be proud of, while also learning basic musical and social skills, such as listening to and communicating with their peers. It would take place during after school hours, from 3 p.m. – 8 p.m., allowing students to participate whenever they can make it. With some mild scheduling, we can allow students to come on their own schedule, understanding that many of the children in this community have other responsibilities, but still try to plan loosely to avoid overcrowding.



*Figure 2. The students of Kelly's Music and More, a school using a similar group-based method of teaching to the Melody Project, at work. Retrieved from kellysmusicandmore.com.*

### 3. Description of Proposed Work

#### a. Objectives of Project

This will not be an easy task to undertake, but with the appropriate funds and dedication, it is certainly feasible. Our main objectives are as follows:

- To create a free, fun, and safe environment for students to learn how use a variety of musical instruments and understand basic music notation
- To foster a community of respect and a willingness in our students to work together that will teach students how to listen and communicate in all aspects of their lives
- To offer an opportunity for older students to learn how to educate and handle younger students

#### b. Location and Time

I would like to position this program in Lynn, Massachusetts out of standard school hours rather than being an actual school program so students from anywhere could enjoy it and those who actually bothered to sign up would most likely really want to be there, rather than the children who often end up in band or chorus classes during school against their will.

Ideally, this would be a yearlong venture, with only a few weeks off to account for various vacations throughout the school year. We would like students to be able to attend after almost any school day, and still have the opportunity to continue attending during the summer.



Though this program will continue to need funding to pay for the teachers as the years go on, this first year will be the most expensive as we are just starting out and need to actually obtain the instruments with which these students can learn.



*Figure 3. Students of one of Lynn's high school bands. They only practice during the school year. Retrieved from [sites.google.com/site/2009lynnbandboostersseason/](https://sites.google.com/site/2009lynnbandboostersseason/).*

### c. Lesson Structure

Based on years of studies and real-life experience, as well as the belief that this would cut down somewhat on costs, this project would feature musical classes that are mostly group-lesson based, potentially with several students of different ages even on some different instruments. I think this is an effective way to run such a program for the following reasons;

- An instructor can teach multiple students the same thing at once, still giving personal attention when required but cutting down on the time an instructor would need to be working or how many instructors would need to be hired.
- More importantly, the group setting of teaching allows students to learn from an instructor *and* from their peers, learn how to teach their peers, learn more than one instrument, and learn how to listen and be patient. I have experience in group lessons solely focused on violins and group lessons that had multiple keyboards, guitars, saxophones, drums, and voices playing all at once and these both taught me how to

listen to others and gave me an opportunity to be a part of something greater, to collaborate with others to create beauty.

Of course, nothing would get accomplished if there were too much diversity in age and instrument at all times, but I think a healthy balance of more specific lessons (focused on one instrument type or level of knowledge based about an instrument) and group lessons would be incredibly helpful for one's musical development.

#### d. Instrument Selection

Especially in the early stages of the development of this project, we could easily bite off more than we could chew in planning such a grand program, so the project will be limited to guitars, keyboards, and vocals (which would require microphones and amplifiers).

In learning how to use guitars and keyboards, students will unlock a wealth of information that will help them in any musical environment. Guitars are the foundational instrument in most music that modern American students hear, so learning this instrument would allow them to participate in creating the music that is always around them. Furthermore, once one learns how to use a guitar, one has an easier time learning how to use almost any stringed instrument (much like how someone who already knows Spanish has a much easier time learning Italian). Keyboards, on the other hand, teach students basics of music theory without them even realizing since their build makes understanding scales and chords much more intuitive than any other instrument. Moreover, keyboards are also commonly used in modern music and synthesizers, which follow the same shape and form, are fundamental for modern music's creation. If students had a basic grasp of guitars or keyboards, let alone both,

they would be unlocking a whole wealth of musical understanding. More detailed information regarding the instrument selection can be found in the outline of the budget below.

#### e. Schedule

Based on the timing of the grant submissions and grant awards listed on the NEA, this program could not fully begin until January of 2020, with the notice of award released on November, 2019. We would like to start this program as quickly as possible, so in those last few months of 2019, we would have to pull together many elements to prepare the program for the following school year period (Monday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the day Lynn public schools will be back in session). This would be a time of heavy workload for the program coordinators, but they are more than willing for the ultimate benefits. They would have to secure their lesson and storage room(s) within Memorial City Hall, get the word out there about the program to students of Lynn as well as students of nearby music schools who would want to volunteer, collect data on interest so as to more clearly plan who will be able to show up when, confirm some attendance with students and parents so as to estimate initial instrument purchase, and purchase the instruments with the donation money we already have, all within November and December.

Once the program actually begins, we will host group lessons on Monday and Thursday afternoons, 3 p.m. – 8 p.m., to accommodate for school, which we strongly encourage our students to attend. This schedule will cover most weeks, with the exception of two weeks in the summer and two around Christmas and New Year's, at the discretion of the Primary Instructor and Program Coordinators.

## 4. Description of Available Facilities

For this project to work, we would need a place to not only hold the lessons but also store the instruments that were not currently in use. Fortunately, Lynn's Memorial City Hall and Auditorium have offered some extra space at least to hold the lessons and suggested that we could use the auditorium space for fundraising concerts if we give enough advanced warning.<sup>6</sup> Since we are already operating on a tight budget due to the sheer magnitude of the project, the opportunity to use such a space to create more funds, instead of losing them, is extremely beneficial for this project.



*Figure 4. The Lynn Memorial Auditorium in Lynn's City Hall. Retrieved from [www.lynnauditorium.com/rent.shtml](http://www.lynnauditorium.com/rent.shtml).*

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<sup>6</sup> "Renting the Auditorium." *The Lynn Auditorium*, 2018, <http://www.lynnauditorium.com/rent.shtml>.

Though we could not comfortably leave all our instruments in the City Hall, there is storage space for at least seven keyboards, several guitars, and small vocal equipment, which we would have to retrieve each day for lessons in one of their larger meeting rooms. Fortunately, the keyboards figured into the budget below are all quite portable and come with detachable stands so, though shuffling our instruments back and forth every lesson is less than ideal, it will suffice until this program can afford more space on its own. Additionally, our instructors can bring a few guitars home with them and, once we establish our regular and dedicated students, we can start sending instruments home with them as well.



Figure 5. Lynn's City Hall. Retrived from [www.flickr.com/photos/21953562@N07/12375957155](http://www.flickr.com/photos/21953562@N07/12375957155).

## 5. Personnel

Though university students with a focus on music will prove quite valuable to this process with their volunteer work, there are some program coordinators and music teachers who are pivotal for this project to work.

### a. Paid Staff

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*Emma Manning: Primary Program Coordinator*

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As Program Manager, Emma will have to keep the Melody Project up and running—arranging the purchase of instruments, the renting of the space when needed, the hiring of instructors and volunteers, and so on. As a graduate of Wentworth Institute of Technology with a degree in Business Management, as well as a life-long lover and student of music, Emma is uniquely qualified to represent the Melody Project and is eager to work with the city of Lynn to make sure as many students can access this opportunity as possible. Her experience at the Cannon Theatre of Littleton, MA in managing both theatrical productions and staged vocal performances will help her know what is required for for such an undertaking from minute details, like the way to plug microphones into the speaker, to larger issues, like how to request space for performance if the time comes. Since this job would only require her presence for a few hours, this is the perfect occupation for such a qualified woman who only wants to work part-time due to her recent child.

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*Victoria Bourque: Program Coordinator/Alternate Instructor*

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As a program coordinator, I assist Emma in making sure the Program is running smoothly and addressing any issues that may come up. Most of my qualifications come from experience in the musical education scene—I have been a stage manager for theatrical productions and an assistant vocal, piano, violin, and guitar instructor at local community theatres and music schools in Littleton, MA. Impassioned about this program as I am, I would also participate in taking on instructing hours that our primary instructor cannot—working with our student volunteers to help participants have the best musical experience that they can.

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*Emily Barkovic: Primary Instructor*

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A recent graduate from Wagner College with a degree in Music, Emily Barkovic is extremely qualified to take on the position of Primary Instructor of the Melody Project. An incredible guitarist, pianist, and vocalist, she has extreme talent in each of the instruments this project will be focusing on and she has years of experience working with children in the arts, especially in theatre.



*Figure 6. Our primary instructor, Emily Barkovic. Submitted by the subject.*



## b. Volunteer Staff

We cannot forget our student volunteers who would work with our instructors to help assist the project students in anything they need. These volunteers are integral to alleviating the workload of the instructors, who can only lead so many children at once.



*Figure 7. A Berklee student participating in one of their many community-based jobs. Retrieved from [www.berklee.edu/CGR/community-service-employment](http://www.berklee.edu/CGR/community-service-employment).*



## 6. Budget

In total, we would need at least \$22,000 in addition to the \$25,000 already donated to account for a total cost of about \$47,000 to get this program running for a year. We request that you match our donation of \$25,000 to account for any contingencies that might arise in the process. The budget below accounts for the salaries of our teachers, the musical instruments for our students, and musical accessories required. Fortunately, many people are enthusiastic about donating their time and resources towards increasing access to music, so some of these costs may be cut by volunteer work.

### a. Employees

Our schedule demands that we would need at least one paid employee present Monday through Thursday from 3 – 8 p.m. If we paid this music teacher a standard part-time rate (\$35 per hour) and assumed this teacher would work about 48 weeks a year (accounting for various vacation periods throughout the year), we would need to pay this teacher (or team of teachers, if we wanted to give our primary instructor more breaks) about \$33,600 a year in total.

We also need to pay our part-time Program Coordinators for their work in arranging the entire program. Paid \$30 per hour, the primary Program Coordinator would only need to do a few hours of work a week on average, working some weeks more than others. If she averages about 6 hours of work a week, her total cost by the end of the year would be about \$8,640, with the cost of the other program coordinator being more malleable, likely not totaling more than \$1000 a year.

There's also several nearby universities that offer degrees in both music and education—not to mention the nearby schools, such as Berklee, that focus solely on music—whose students would benefit from participating in such a program as an educator themselves. Not only could we then offer younger students the chance to learn how to play music, but we could also help older students learn how to teach and give them an opportunity that would help add to their experience—and resume. Since this could be such a good opportunity for students—especially those looking into music education jobs—we could open the program up for volunteering, as many other music schools do. Kelly's Music and More, located in Littleton, MA, for instance, offers this opportunity for high school students to get volunteering hours and for college students (particularly those from Berklee) to get something to put on their resume, and they get quite a few students participating this way. This extra help would ease the paid employee's task of wrangling students at no cost.

## b. Instruments

Another thing we must pay for is the actual instruments that the students will play. Once again, many older students of music have expressed willingness to donate their unused instruments (smaller or cheaper guitars and keyboards), but we cannot rely on this entirely.

Each instrument in this program has a slightly different need. Guitars, for instance, are relatively portable, so the music instructors and standard, returning students can take and bring guitars as necessary. There are no obvious options for discounts for buying guitars in bulk, but

the standard price for a single, decent acoustic guitar from Musician's Friend is \$49.99.<sup>7</sup> If we buy 30 guitars (a calculation based on how many students our teachers would be able to handle at once), that would cost \$1,499.70.

Keyboards, on the other hand, are slightly more expensive and slightly less portable—meaning the space that the City Hall would be willing to lend us for permanently stationing some instruments would be dedicated to these instruments. Since they are also larger, we would invest in fewer of them. American Musical Supply offers decent full-size keyboards that come with stands and sustain pedals for \$99.95.<sup>8</sup> If we purchase seven of these keyboards, we then need another \$699.95.

Finally, voices are happily free, but the tools we use to project them are not. When a large number of students are singing at once, individual microphones are not required for each student, so we could invest in six microphones from Musician's Friend (getting two packs of three with stands) for \$119.99



Figure 8. A standard Rogue RA-090 Dreadnought Acoustic Guitar that we would be investing in. Retrieved from [www.bestacousticguitarguide.com/rogu-e-ra-090/](http://www.bestacousticguitarguide.com/rogu-e-ra-090/).

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<sup>7</sup> "Rogue RA-090 Dreadnought Acoustic Guitar, Natural." *Musician's Friend*, 2018, [https://express.google.com/u/0/product/17831459158633436744\\_5572860098212803\\_12145?oc=OgUxMjE0NQ](https://express.google.com/u/0/product/17831459158633436744_5572860098212803_12145?oc=OgUxMjE0NQ).

<sup>8</sup> "Casio CTK2090V Portable Keyboard with Power Supply and Stand." *American Musical Supply*, 2018, [https://www.americanmusical.com/Item--i-CAS-CTK2090V?src=Y0802G00SRCHCAPN&adpos=1o2&scid=scplpCAS+CTK2090V&sc\\_intid=CAS+CTK2090V&gclid=EAlaI\\_QobChMI8fHK6IGl3wIVD8DICh2BkghXEAQYAABEgIFKvD\\_BwE](https://www.americanmusical.com/Item--i-CAS-CTK2090V?src=Y0802G00SRCHCAPN&adpos=1o2&scid=scplpCAS+CTK2090V&sc_intid=CAS+CTK2090V&gclid=EAlaI_QobChMI8fHK6IGl3wIVD8DICh2BkghXEAQYAABEgIFKvD_BwE).

each, or \$239.98 total.<sup>9</sup> We then also need at least two speakers, which we can get for \$249.00 each (or \$498.00 total).

In total, we need about \$2,937.63 for the instruments.

### c. Other Resources

With the \$25,000 donation and a \$25,000 grant, we still would have about \$3,000 left over to cover the incidental costs that come with running a music school. Happily, basic instructions on how to play chords and what chords are to popular songs have never been more accessible than they are today on the internet. Since many students have phones, we can easily pass along information about what song is being played and how through text and email. However, not all students have such technology, so we could also offer printouts of chords and other information to those who need it using the money left over. We could also use these funds to raise awareness of the music school through advertisements and posters.

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<sup>9</sup> "Shure PG48 3-Pack Mic and Stand Kit." *Musician's Friend*, 2018, [https://express.google.com/u/0/product/13958679640098614912\\_7999369297297168283\\_12145?utm\\_source=google\\_shopping&utm\\_medium=tu\\_cu&utm\\_content=eid-lsjeuxoeqt&gtim=C12frpWk5ozyQxC2veHereeDgYsBGPdNmzkiA1VTRCig7-vgBTDxXg&utm\\_campaign=12145&gclid=EAlaIqobChMI7pWnuoKI3wIV2ODIC3pWgojEAQYA1ABEgKV7vD\\_BwE](https://express.google.com/u/0/product/13958679640098614912_7999369297297168283_12145?utm_source=google_shopping&utm_medium=tu_cu&utm_content=eid-lsjeuxoeqt&gtim=C12frpWk5ozyQxC2veHereeDgYsBGPdNmzkiA1VTRCig7-vgBTDxXg&utm_campaign=12145&gclid=EAlaIqobChMI7pWnuoKI3wIV2ODIC3pWgojEAQYA1ABEgKV7vD_BwE).

## 7. Summary

If the Art Works with National Endowment for the Arts chooses to match the donation of \$25,000 to fund the Melody Project for the students of Northeastern Massachusetts, they would be giving students of Northeastern Massachusetts benefits far beyond mere musical capabilities. Yes, they will develop the basic skills required to create the music that they hear on the radio, on the television, on the Internet, but they will also develop skills that will help them in everyday life, such as fine motor skills, the ability to listen closely, and even the ability to educate themselves. Moreover, this program will stop musical education from being the elite luxury that it has become, and will instead allow students from any background, no matter how hesitant their parents are to give them the gift of music, to participate in creating something magical.

We at the Melody Project strongly believe in the power of music and the benefits it would provide the underserved community of Lynn. The D'Addario Foundation has chosen to join us. Will you?



Figure 9. Students of Lynn's Breed Middle School (which has no after-school music program).  
Retreived from [twitter.com/BreedMiddle](https://twitter.com/BreedMiddle).

## 8. End Matter

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## b. Front Image

The cover image was taken from the Facebook page of Kelly’s Music and More, stationed in Littleton, MA.

