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# Bayside Life

The key to your community



## Taking Center Stage

**Queens Native Brings Her American Dream to The Limelight**

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The key to your community

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A student from Center Stage Music Center on the guitar. The Center is the product of a former Flushing resident's passion for music that began at a young age.

Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center



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Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center



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Photo courtesy of Jessica Chakraborty



### You could be a Bayside Life community contributor!

Queens resident Jessica Chakraborty is a chef in NYC but shares her favorite recipes with Bayside Life. It's easy to join the community conversation; just email articles, photos, and information to the email shown below.

**Get involved! Send your photos, stories or events to:**

**bayside@hibu.com**

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# Building Her American Dream On a Music School

*Veronica Sanchez found her passion in music and provided a center where aspiring musicians can find theirs also.*

*by Alyssa Kennedy and Angela O'Reilly  
Community contributors*

**T**he history of Center Stage began with one woman's dream to share her passion for music with others. Born in Ecuador and raised in Flushing, director and co-owner Veronica Sanchez realized early on that being in the presence of music is something she simply could not live without.

Sanchez's love for music started to develop at the age of 13 when she would spend hours every day after school tinkering away at the upright piano located in her mother's workplace. It wasn't long before she was able to teach herself how to play some of her favorite songs by ear. Sanchez's parents enlisted their daughter into private lessons after hearing her natural talent. Shortly after, she dove further into the musical world and joined her church's band, which helped to solidify her decision to pursue music as a career. Sanchez double majored in music and psychology at Queens College's Aaron Copland School of Music. Outside of the classroom, she taught piano and voice lessons, and performed as a singer-songwriter all around

New York City. Between her collegiate studies, seven years of teaching prior to the birth of Center Stage, and continuing to perform, Sanchez had discovered she had only just laid the foundation for her intended career path.

With a clear goal in sight, she decided to combine her knowledge and experience and build a student-centered home for aspiring musicians. Her dream came true with the help and support of co-owners and siblings Yadira and Hector Sanchez, and Center Stage Music Center was born. The name "Center Stage" derives from the desire to create a setting in which the students are the center of focus. This philosophy is one of many factors that set Center Stage apart from other music schools. Offering one-on-one instruction for a wide variety of instruments, Center Stage enthusiastically showcases its students in recitals that take place twice a year as well as motivational newsletters that highlight the hard work of its students and teachers. Learning music should be a special and positive experience catered to each individual—Center Stage and its team of talented, university-trained instructors makes this their mission on a daily basis.

Center Stage's slogan is "Learn, Play, Have Fun." They envision a community of emerging musicians who are learning musical skills while playing with excellence, and having fun while expressing themselves creatively. Their sense of community also extends to the public, constantly striving to participate in various philanthropic events. Their involvements include caroling at Adults and Children with Learning and Developmental Disabilities during the holiday season, performing at several shelters after Hurricane Sandy, and continuous donations to various groups in the community.

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**A student learns how to play the drums. The music school offers an opportunity to play in a "rock band."**  
Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center



**Toddlers explore music fundamentals through fun rhythm exercises, sing-a-longs, ear training games, and an introduction to an instrument.**  
Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center



**A student during a piano concert. Children learn can learn an instrument of their choice and prepare for a concert or competition.**  
Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center





**A young student plucks the strings of a violin.**

Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center

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All of Center Stage's teachers are university trained and most are New York State certified educators, holding a bachelor's, master's, and/or doctorate degree. Many have studied with professional musicians such as Jimmy Ponder, Sean Jones, members of the NYC Metropolitan Opera and members of the Philharmonic Orchestra. They have a vast range of instructional experience including teaching in a public school setting, leading C.A.P.E (creative arts program of East Meadow in Long Island), being an adjunct professor at

Molloy College, and judging at the New York State School Music Association festival. Aside from teaching, Center Stage's multi-instrumental instructors have also performed in various famous clubs throughout NYC as well as across the country and have played with musicians such as Yo-Yo Ma, Richard Stoltzman, and Bobby Rondinelli of Black Sabbath. Some of the teachers are also successful songwriters who have done work for commercials and worked with multi-platinum and Grammy-award winning writers.

The music instructors at Center Stage have dedicated themselves to inspiring and bettering their students as both musicians and artists. A student's parent states, "Aiden is not only playing the piano wonderfully but he has learned about music theory while at Center Stage. His teachers have been an awesome inspiration and they have really connected with him."

"My daughter started lessons with them almost a year ago and not only does she love it but she's doing great," states another proud parent. The students of Center Stage have in return given their teachers plenty to be proud of.

While speaking about one of her students, instructor Lisa states "She has a huge passion for the piano as evidenced by her desire to work hard on every piece she is given." Teacher Kelby is proud of one of his students for "preferring to tackle longer, harder classical pieces which inevitably will pay off when it comes to playing ability and possessing an analytically musical mind."

One of their first students Alexandra and now performing

**Center Stage Music Center opens.**

# 2011

*Veronica Sanchez, along with her siblings Yadira and Hector, officially opened up Center Stage in September 2011.*



**A young student practices with her cello.**  
Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center

artists, Skela, says, “Center Stage is like a second home. Center Stage has helped me find myself and embark on a musical career.” Students say their favorite part of music lessons is to hear the final piece as they successfully play it after all of the hard work and dedicated practice time that they put in. The most rewarding part of teaching is seeing your students succeed and at Center Stage, the students continue to delight the staff. Many students received a perfect or near perfect score on New York State School Music Association, in turn becoming nominated for All County and Long Island String Festival Association.

The dream of creating an environment for emerging musicians to blossom into successful, well-rounded musicians has become a reality for Veronica Sanchez and her family with the birth of Center Stage Music Center. In the two short years that this music-learning establishment has been open, Sanchez and her team of instructors has grown a small vision into a successful and joyous business where students can feel at home. Center Stage is a platform for people of all ages to express themselves creatively through the art of music and to take “center stage” in showcasing their musical accomplishments.

# Programs Offered

*Center Stage Music Center offers group and private music lessons for students as young as three years old.*

## Music theory

Students learn music terminology, and musical techniques that composers and writers use to create different effects.

## Songwriting/music composition

Students learn how to notate songs, write lyrics, and arrange. Whether they want to compose classical music, or write their own pop songs, the staff can guide them through the music-writing process step by step.

## Rock band

Students take what they’ve learned in the classroom and now rock out to it. Students learn how to listen and work as a team.

## Chamber ensembles

Students can form a chamber ensemble. The instructors will guide students in playing as a group and working as a team, as they progress towards their goals. The staff can also assist the student groups in writing original pieces and songs.

*Center Stage Music Center is located at 808 Carman Ave., Westbury, in Long Island. Visit [centerstagemusiccenter.com](http://centerstagemusiccenter.com) for more information.*



**Veronica Sanchez grew up in Flushing and realized her passion for music at an early age. Sanchez is one of the co-founders of Center Stage Music Center in Long Island.**

Photo courtesy of Center Stage Music Center

