

# Former BHS Graduate Lead Director On Music Album

**By: Karen Carpenter**

Each life takes unexpected twists and turns. Decisions and choices each may influence the future and the life one leads.

Growing up in a small Midwestern community does one picture themselves standing on a stage or a sound booth in Europe one day as part of their work?

Eric Buchholz, formerly of Barnesville, works as a lead director on projects which perform background music for film and video games as well as albums. Buchholz has lived in the Seattle, WA area for the past four years.

His latest project is a 74-minute album of music arrangements is based on the video game The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. It is titled Hero of Time. Buchholz flew to Europe to record the live orchestra on stage.

“Somehow, I ended up in the thick of this all before I even had a chance to really think about whether to start a career in music or not!” explained Buchholz. “When I was in high school, I would collaborate online with other musicians from whom I learned a lot about fundamental basics of using music software and writing music.”

In 2011 while a senior at Barnesville High School, Buchholz was invited to assist with the production of an orchestral concert series for The Legend of Zelda’s 25th anniversary. It was one of Nintendo’s most successful video game franchises.

“That was my first project working with Chad Seiter, and the first time working at a recording session,” said Buchholz. The recordings were put on a CD that was bundled with every copy of The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword, which sold millions of copies worldwide.

Composer Chad Seiter, and his conductor/orchestrator wife, Susie Seiter would continue to play an integral role in Buchholz’s future. The Seiters live in California.

Buchholz is the son of Willie Buchholz and Michelle Schindler, both former Barnesville residents. He has one sister Kinsey Benz and step siblings, Nora and Jack Schindler.

Remembering him from high school Barnesville High School Principal Bryan Strand said, “Eric was a great kid, very involved in band. I remember he composed and directed a piece his senior year of music from a wide variety of video games and the kids played it for the concert, it was awesome.

“Eric was always friendly, polite and a very hard worker, not just in band but in school as well. Seemed to interact well among a wide variety of groups in the school,” continued Strand.

After high school Buchholz attended one year at the University of Minnesota Duluth. He then transferred to Concordia College in Moorhead for a year. Buchholz studied music composition.

“I decided I should look somewhere farther from home and planned to finish my degree in Seattle,” remembered Buchholz.

It became apparent to Buchholz that he would need to relocate to a city with a large music and/or entertainment sector.

“The vast majority of film and game studios are located on the west coast, with Seattle being home to lots of game studios and technology companies like Microsoft, Google,



Eric Buchholz, a 2011 Barnesville High School graduate, works in the control booth in Bratislava, Slovakia. Behind him the orchestra records the music. He was lead director on the new music album Hero of Time based on a video game. His work includes writing the music, orchestration, music notation and formatting all of the printed scores and parts. He lives in Seattle, WA.

Nintendo, etc.” Buchholz explained. “Seattle is also a big music town, with lots of recording studios and the fantastic Seattle Symphony.”

Unfortunately, the school he was accepted to in Seattle would not accept many of his transfer credits, and would have required Buchholz to retake roughly a year’s worth of courses.

At that point, Buchholz made the decision to go the apprenticeship route, which allowed him to learn on the job and get paid for it.

Beginning in his senior year in high school Buchholz had continued to work with Chad and Susie Seiter on many different films, games, and TV projects. “Each has been an incredible learning experience,” expressed Buchholz.

Seiter offered an apprenticeship opportunity to Buchholz. Chad Seiter had served as apprentice to Michael Giacchino, composer of music for such block buster films as Rogue One and Doctor Strange. Now Seiter was giving Buchholz the chance to learn from his experience.

Buchholz explains his work in the following way. “Orchestral music has a very important role in modern day films, television shows, and video games,” said Buchholz. “Every production will have a lead composer who writes the music and assembles a ‘music preparation’ team of orchestrators and copyists.

“Music preparation involves everything that happens between writing the music, and recording it with the orchestra.

“Composers generally write music using MIDI, a protocol that has been in use since the early 1980s. An assistant converts the composer’s MIDI into workable sheet music notation.

“An orchestrator adds dynamics, articulations, and assigns melodies and harmonies to various instruments. Copyists format the individual pages of music that are unique to each instrument in the orchestra.

“I do all of the above! I work regularly with composer Seiter, and his conductor/orchestrator wife, Susie, and together the three of us make a great team.

“When I’m not busy with music preparation projects, I like to produce my own that typically

involve bringing existing video game music into the concert hall or the palm of people’s hands.

“It’s a very difficult job, with brutal production schedules and very tight deadlines. You get used to it!”

“Just recently, we had to prep, orchestrate, copy, and print an entire video game score with less than a day before the orchestra was to record it. A job like that would normally span a week or two under ideal circumstances,” continued Buchholz.

Hero of Time, the most recent work, was a collaboration between Buchholz and Sebastian Wolff, founder of an online community of musicians known as Materia Collective.

Together they were able to fundraise over \$50,000 allowing them to fly to Europe and record the album of music arrangements. The music was based on the video game The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, which was originally released in 1998 on the Nintendo 64 video game console.

“I was the lead director and producer for the project, while Sebastian primarily took care of administrative tasks like licensing, distribution, marketing, and other important tasks. This allowed me to focus heavily on the creative side of things like writing the music, orchestration, music notation, formatting all of the printed scores and parts, and communicating with other members of our team,” explained Buchholz.

He had about four months to write all of the music for Hero of Time. Buchholz started writing at the beginning of August 2016, and recorded everything with the orchestra in December.

After that, the recordings had to go through the process of post-production, which includes editing, mixing, and mastering.

Currently the project is at the manufacturing stage, including CDs and vinyl LPs which are expected to ship out within the next month or two.

“Overall, the reception has been incredible. Landing on Billboard’s Classical number seven on the charts and Classical Crossover at number six was pretty exciting!”, Buchholz exclaimed.

While video game music tends to be similar to film scores in many ways, one key difference is that music in video games is interactive. Players are given the opportunity to directly affect the music that is in the game, which gives composers and game developers creative freedom to make an experience that goes beyond the typical notions of games or music.

When he isn’t busy with his hectic work schedule, Buchholz likes to travel as frequently as he can, cook various ethnic foods and study the Japanese language.

Mastering Japanese is a very valuable skill in the video game industry, considering Japan accounts for a large percentage of the industry.

“Experiencing different cultures really helps to see the world from different perspectives, which in turn helps me create music that I hope will inspire others,” commented Buchholz.

Video games have been a leisure activity for Buchholz for as long as he can remember. “Naturally, the music was one of the aspects of them that stood out the most to me,” he said. “I spent a lot of time when I was younger collecting soundtracks, listening to them, and transcribing them by ear.”

In high school and college Buchholz studied percussion. He also took lessons for a few other instruments like flute, trumpet and piano just to learn how to write more idiomatically for instruments.

“Eric approached me in his eighth grade about playing an

arrangement of the Mario Bro’s music for the Junior High Band that he had written,” remembered Aaron Romaine, former BHS band instructor. “The music was done well, very few mistakes and the rest of the band jumped on board to play it so we decided to do this song for our spring concert.

“The following years in senior high he was working on the Mario Bro’s song, but he was really trying to write out an arrangement of ‘The Legend of Zelda’. When he was satisfied with what he had written, we decided to perform it for the spring concert. Eric directed the Senior High Concert Band for that number.

Throughout high school Eric was very passionate about playing percussion. He organized a student led drum corps that performed not only with the marching band, but also during half time of a basketball game.

“His passion really raised the bar for the rest of the band,” said Romaine. “The band parents supported the idea of upgrading the percussion equipment and we purchased a new set of Tom’s and a number of bass drums.”

Buchholz also performed with Night Fire a drum corps led by some North Dakota State University percussion students.

At graduation Romaine presented all of the seniors with conducting batons as a graduation gift and a reminder of their contributions to the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12B



It takes a lot of talented musicians to create the sound desired for a movie score or a video game. Eric Buchholz, 2011 BHS graduate, conducted and arranged the music performed by this orchestra in Bratislava, Slovakia last December.

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