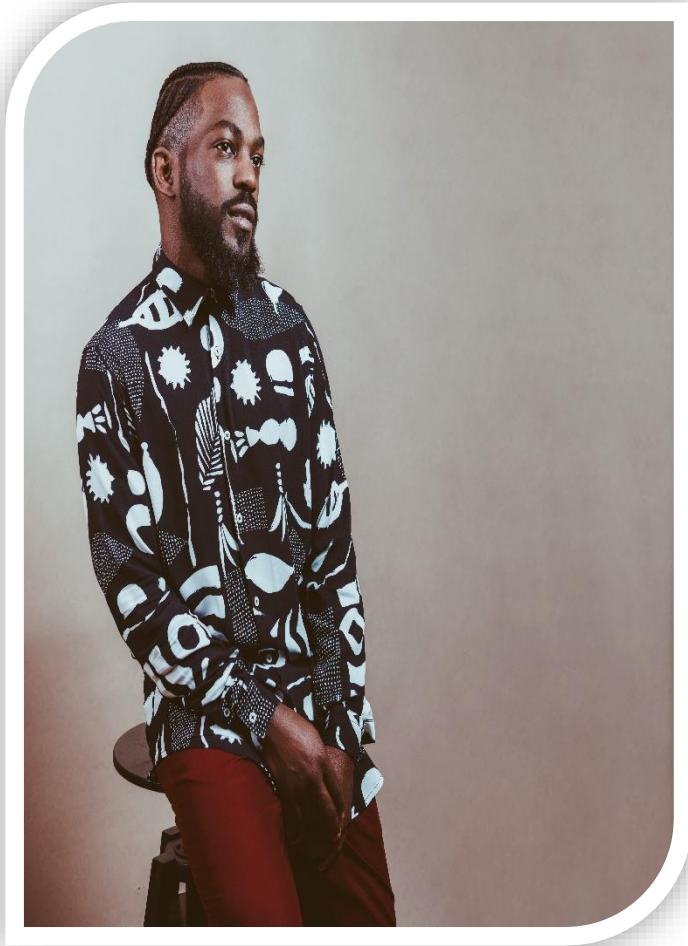


# Black Horse Pike Regional School District

## Spotlight on Alumni - April 2021

### Will Wells, Timber Creek High School c/o 2007



*"Will graduated in 2007. Since then he has worked as a professional musician, composer, film scoring composer, arranger, and music producer. Will was a guitarist, keyboardist, and backing vocalist for the group "Imagine Dragons" and went on their world tour with them in 2015-2016. Will also was the Electronic Music Producer for the Broadway smash hit, "Hamilton." Will has also worked with famous musicians Barbara Streisand, LMFAO, Anthony Ramos, Quincey Jones, Cynthia Erivo (Star of the movie "Harriet"), Pentatonix, and many, many more! For more information, check out his website at: [willwellsmusic.com](http://willwellsmusic.com) Each year Will returns to Timber Creek to speak with our musicians, has brought in guest performers and conducted a song writing workshop.*

**~John Perkis, TC Music Education teacher**

**1. AA: Upon graduation, what post-secondary path did you take and why?**

*Will: Upon graduating from Timber Creek Regional High School in 2007, I decided to attend Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. After completing their “5-Week Summer Program” in the Summer of 2005, I knew that there was something about this institution that uniquely suited my needs, my passion, and my dreams. I was always interested in traditional and contemporary music, as well as the ever-evolving technology that was used in its creation. Berklee truly felt like the only place where I could fully immerse myself in the study of music and music technology, while being surrounded by thousands of other scholars who were passionate about music or the music industry. I didn’t know it then, but the latter would be one of the most valuable assets I would gain from my time in Boston.*

**2. AA: Looking back, would you have done anything differently and why?**

*Will: As I reflect on the journey that I’ve had in music and in business, it’s only natural to zoom in on the moments when things didn’t go as planned, or even when there were colossal failures. What I’ve learned, however, is that my biggest downfalls taught me the biggest lessons. For that reason, I wouldn’t change anything that has brought me to this very moment. At the same time, one of the things I often wonder is how much more I would have grown if I had exposed myself to more peer criticism in college. As I began my career, I learned that how you react to and metabolize criticism from those who you were creating with plays a significant role in being considered for future collaborative endeavors.*

**3. Describe your career/profession today?**

*Will: Today, with a decade of professional experience under my belt, I am humbled to say that music and entrepreneurship are the only things I have dedicated my focus to since graduating from Berklee. It is important that both of these things are indicated, because I quickly learned even while still in college that, more often than not, having a career in music means running your own business as well. I’ve had an exciting journey in these last ten years, sharing songs, productions, the studio and the stage with incredible artists and humans such as Imagine Dragons, Logic, The RZA, Wu-Tang Clan, Wyclef Jean, DJ Premier, Quincy Jones, Barbra Streisand, LMFAO, Pentatonix, Cynthia Erivo, and Anthony Ramos. I have also been honored to contribute to and/or perform in shows and productions such as Hamilton: An American Musical, ESPN’s Heisman Trophy Ceremony,*

*the 92nd Academy Awards, NatGeo's Genius:Aretha, A GRAMMY Salute to the Sounds of Change, and many daytime or late night shows such as Ellen, Jimmy Fallon, James Corden, Conan O'Brien, Jimmy Kimmel, and Dick Clark's New Years Rockin' Eve. The most exciting thing about my profession, is that my role so often changes depending on what I am dedicating my time to. I have worked as a songwriter, producer, multi-instrumentalist performer, on-screen actor/performer, vocal producer, executive producer (for studio albums), musical director, film composer, music editor (for films), recording engineer, mixing engineer, mastering engineer, front of house engineer, production manager, road manager, tour manager, playback engineer, independent record label executive, and as a consultant for film/tv story development. While some of these may seem like a far departure from others, I've done my best to pay attention to where the dots connect so that I can use every previous experience, success, and even failure to inform and shape the next opportunity.*

**4. AA: What impact did Timber Creek have on your career path/profession?**

*Will: My time at Timber Creek laid a critically important foundation for my career path. I learned many lessons, the first of which was managing a schedule and being decisive about where I would dedicate my time. I wanted to pursue sports and music at the same time, but very early on in my freshman year it became clear to me under the guidance of teachers and coaches that if I tried to commit to both, I very well might end up letting both groups down. Looking back, I am glad that I chose to commit to the music program.*

**5. AA: Were there specific teachers, coaches, counselors, administrators, secretaries or other professionals that had a major impact on you while in school, and if so, who were those professionals and describe how they helped you along your HS journey.**

*Will: I had so many incredible teachers, counselors, administrators, and more who shaped my experience at Timber Creek. There are so many that I want to name, but I am afraid I would leave out others who were just as impactful. For that reason, I will keep it to five, with brief anecdotes. **Mrs. Robinson**, the principal during my time at Timber Creek, could not have been more encouraging and supportive. She was in the audience at every concert, and facilitated opportunities for me to perform along with the music department staff at events such as Graduation and Senior Prom, that unbeknownst to me were no small undertaking to get approval from the district. She and the entire principal's office staff made a lasting impression on me. **Ms. Draper**, my guidance*

counselor, was such a loving and supportive force who helped me navigate many challenges beyond just scheduling and the college search. The entire guidance counselor's office was such a safe space for me, and all of the staff members had an impact on my experience through their kindness and support. **Mr. Stephens**, who was in charge of A/V during my first few years, allowed me to get hands on experience dealing with technology around the school, and encouraged me to not overlook that part of my skillset. He gave me the space to get creative on the "TC Morning Jolt" and even start a Friday morning show with another one of my peers. Beyond this, he let me have hands-on experience with the audio equipment in the theater, which would help set the tone for an important part of my career. **Mr. Campbell**, my freshman year homeroom teacher, gave me a much needed reality check in my first month or so of high school. I allowed my temper to get the best of me one morning, and he pulled me out of class and let me know that that wasn't the way things go in high school or the "real world," and that was something I never forgot. He remained a positive and encouraging presence throughout the rest of my time in high school. **Mrs. Deich**, my 12th grade AP Lit teacher, left an immeasurable mark on me. I remember at the end of my 11th grade year, when it came time to choose between Academic English 12 and Advanced Placement English Literature, I was dead-set on 'coasting' through to the end of my high school experience. She stopped me in the hallway, and said "you're taking my class." I very quickly and adamantly replied with "no I am absolutely not," and she just would not give up on me. The truth is, I didn't think I belonged with the 'smart kids', and Mrs. Deich went out of her way to show me that I didn't only belong, I had something very special of my own to offer to the group. This was one of my first experiences I can recall when someone believed in me more than I believed in myself. Almost ten years later, when I landed the gig with Imagine Dragons for their "Smoke + Mirrors Tour", I called Mrs. Deich to let her know that it was that same spark she lit in me to apply myself and put in the effort necessary to succeed that led me to achieving what was at the time my most significant professional achievement. I know I said five, but I would be remiss in not mentioning **Ms. Miller, Ms. Nordone, Ms. Elliott, Ms. Breier, Ms. Weaver (I'm pretty sure her name changed), Ms. Gibbs, Ms. Hand, Mr. McCoog, Mr. VanHorn, Mr. Hart, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Milavsky, Mr. Saunders, Ms. Selfridge. Also, Mr. Perkis, Mr. O'Neil, Mr. Mell, Mr. Adams, and all of the staff members of the Music Department, Marching Band, and Indoor Drumline**

**6. AA: Which school clubs, sports, activities, etc., if any, did you participate in when you attended your BHP high school? If so, were there any moments or experiences that you can recall that helped you become the person you are today?**

*Will: Many of my “firsts” came by way of the Music Department. Extracurricular activities such as The Musical, Marching Band, Indoor Drumline and Percussion Ensemble, Jazz Band, Vocal Jazz Ensemble, Concert Band, and the Concert Choir provided me the opportunity to push myself and pursue musical excellence. I could go on for ages about those moments and experiences that contributed to my personal growth and helped shape me into the person I’ve become, but I will focus on three. The first, is the band director, **Mr. O’Neil**, who selected me to be the Drum Major of the 2006-2007 Timber Creek Marching Chargers. I didn’t realize that leadership and leadership skills would be such an important part of my professional career, but that experience really added fuel to the fire and set the tone for many of my collegiate and professional endeavors. The second experience would be working with **Mr. Perkis**, the Choral Director, in Concert Choir and all of the after school ensembles. Of note, Mr. Perkis gave me the opportunity to arrange the jazz standard “Night In Tunisia” for the Vocal Jazz Ensemble. Arranging would become an important part of my collegiate experience, as well as my professional journey as a musical director and vocal producer. Sometimes it only takes someone opening a door and giving you an opportunity to show you that there is so much more potential to be uncovered. The third and final experience came during my senior year, when **Mr. Mell**, the Indoor Drumline and Percussion Ensemble Director gave me the opportunity to compose a piano concerto for the show that we would compete with in Tournament Indoor Association. This was my first ever official “commission”, and perhaps one of the most important professional challenges that I received at that time. I learned how to deal with critical feedback, implement changes, take notes, and lead an ensemble as a piano soloist. After a decade in the music industry, I realize that every single thing I learned in that experience still applies today. A prime example would be working with clients like ESPN when I composed the Heisman Trophy Ceremony Theme in 2019. **I am forever grateful to Mr. Perkis, Mr. O’Neil, and Mr. Mell, and to Mr. Adams who was the band director during my freshman and sophomore years, because all of them saw something special in me that I didn’t even see in myself.***

**7. AA: Please share your memories of Timber Creek that might inspire today's student body?**

*Will: In my senior year at Timber Creek, I was nominated for a "People's Choice Award". For this show, I composed a song as a tribute to the senior class, and **Mrs. Robinson, Mr. Perkis**, and many other teachers and staff members were so supportive that they allowed me to perform it many more times that year. One of my most significant memories was when they advocated for me to perform at graduation, which was my biggest audience at that time, and still one of the most special performances of my lifetime. Everyone who helped make that dream a reality may never know the impact it had on me, but I am forever grateful for them believing in me from the beginning.*

**8. What advice would you give to our current student body?**

*Will: The most important advice I could give to the current student body is to always remember that you **DO** have worth, your voice **DOES** matter, and the only person that can ever stop you from achieving your goals is **YOU**. Growing up the youngest of six kids with hard working parents making ends meet with humble means, I saw firsthand what it means to make the best of what you have, as well as the power of faith and gratitude. If I could turn back time, I would have said "thank you" ten times as much, not only to all of the incredible faculty and staff members at Timber Creek, but to my parents, siblings, and friends. The more you pay attention to what there is to be grateful for, the more it allows light to drive away the darkness.*



**Where Inspiring Excellence is our Standard and Student Achievement is the Result!**

