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Tapping into the Younger Generation

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With the resounding strains of a Jimmy Hendricks song, the precision of an Olympic athlete and even some help from some little honey bees members of the Riverside Symphonia have found ways of reaching out to our next generation of musicians. The Outreach Program is an additional dimension of the Symphonia most noted for its concerts and local events. Throughout the years there has been a continued effort by the Symphonia musicians and its supporters to bring enriching musical experiences to local school children. In collaboration with such organizations as the Lambertville Area Education Foundation, the Delaware Township Community Education Foundation, the Alexandria Township Education Foundation and the Jonathan D. Christ Foundation the Riverside Symphonia provides supplemental music instruction and activities for school based music programs in the Delaware Valley. In the recently held March 10 Art Deco Dance Gala funds totaling \$17,600.00 were raised by Symphonia supporters in a live auction to underwrite this Outreach Program.

With several recent in school events the music students at Delaware Township School were treated to master classes in their area of expertise. The percussion players were hands on with Principal Percussionist Greg Giannascoli, who immediately captured their attention as he began the class by playing Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's "The Flight of the Bumblebee" on the marimba. He then guided students from one percussion instrument to the other showing them how subtle changes in their technique could improve the quality and sound of their playing. Some of the simple tips students will remember: how to look at the conductor through the triangle, how a bit of beeswax can smooth a tambourine making it easier to play and how placing a card at the edge of the snare drum one can alter its sound.

Woodwind students were inspired by Principal Clarinetist Arne Running who taught them the importance of breathing and proper posture. He led them from so so sounding notes to a wonderful full resonate sound by the end of his session, emphasizing the importance of focusing and breathing like and Olympic athlete. He demonstrated the control and amount of air needed to achieve even the faintest pianissimo and boosted their confidence telling them what it takes to be a musician: “the lung capacity of an Olympic athlete, the brains and analytical skills of a mathematician and the focus of a combination of the two.”

In yet another master class at the Delaware Township School Principal Tubaist Scott Force held the attention of an enthusiastic group of Brass players. He discussed the importance of playing an instrument and how it could open doors for the students in later years of life. He emphasized how excelling at playing their instruments could even become tickets to certain Universities and/or Scholarships.

Each of the Principal musicians left the students with a significant message to carry with them throughout their musical careers.

In another Outreach venue the Lambertville Area School Students were able to attend the Dress Rehearsal of The Riverside Symphonia featuring concert Pianist Antonio Di Cristofano of Italy. Invited to take seats in the Church of St. John the Evangelist they watched and listened as the Symphonia ran through its program for the next evening. The students were a bit surprised when Maestro Mariusz Smolij led the Symphonia in a popular Jimmy Hendricks tune and then used this to make a comparison to a Dmitri Shostakovich piece. Through this comparison he enabled students to hear how emotions exuded by a popular tune are actually the very same emotions that can be evoked by classical music.

Concert Pianist Antonio Di Cristofano also held two private performance/master classes with Choral members of the New Hope Solebury and Delaware Township School Districts. In an intimate classroom setting the students experienced a solo performance by this talented pianist followed by an informal question answer session.

Educational Outreach Coordinator Candace Jones Phillips pointed out that through these sessions one could see that music is a “Universal Language”. Despite Antonio’s broken English he was able to reach out to the students with his music. At New Hope Solebury the students in turn gave back with a moving performance of Anton Bruckner’s “Os Justi”. One could see that Antonio was truly moved as their voices transcended all language barriers.

Outreach efforts on the part of the Riverside Symphonia continue throughout the year. Their next event will be a Children’s Concert on Sunday, April 15. Highly esteemed European composer and artist Linard Bardill of Switzerland, will perform “What is the Moon Up To?” a delightful imaginary story told with spoken-word and songs. Conducted by Maestro Mariusz Smolij the concert will also feature the Delaware Township School Chorus and members of the Riverside Symphonia. In Switzerland “What is the Moon Up To” has proven to be the country’s most successful orchestral work for children with the songs becoming many children’s first introduction to music.

The Outreach Program will also be reaching the New Hope Solebury Upper Elementary School Band and Strings students where master classes will be held this spring.

Peggy Krist of the Jonathan D. Krist Foundation perhaps best describes this wonderful resource we have in the Riverside Symphonia when she said: "It's a privilege to live along the river, walk across the bridge and be continually enriched by the talented performances at the Riverside Symphonia. To be able to bring professional musicians into our schools and have at least one student inspired to not just practice, but achieve a balanced understanding about the world through music...well, that's what a civilized community should be doing."

For more information on the Riverside Symphonia's upcoming Children's concert or to order tickets please call: 609 397-7300 or 215 862-3300. The concert will be held in the First Presbyterian Church, 31 North Union Street, Lambertville, NJ at 3pm on April 15. Tickets for this event are \$10 for adults and children