

Northeast Massachusetts Youth Orchestras Hits All the Right Notes with Young Musicians

by **Alyson Aiello** photos by **Rob Huntley**

It takes more than technical training to become a skilled musician; performing is required, too — a lot of performing. Just ask Gerald Dolan, music director of Northeast Massachusetts Youth Orchestras. Since 1995, when the organization was still known as the Northshore Youth Symphony Orchestra (the orchestra took on its current name in 2011), he has watched the organization grow from 30 students to 160 aspiring musicians. As a conductor and teacher, he has also watched many promising young people grow individually, development he calls “remarkable.”

The students, who range in age from 6 to 18, come to NMYO because they love music and want it to be a part of their everyday lives, he says. Their auditions reveal the right mix of passion and talent, and students are then selected to



Top: Dr. David Cox conducts the Wind Ensemble. Under the musical direction of Gerald Dolan (pictured middle row, right), 160 youth musicians ages 6 to 18 make up the eight NMYO orchestras that perform regularly throughout the year.

perform with one or more of NMYO's eight ensembles: the symphony orchestra, wind ensemble, intermezzo orchestra, overture strings ensemble, prelude strings ensemble, select flute choir, flute choir and junior flute choir.

Dolan, who has conducted the intermezzo orchestra since 2012, says his students are required to continue taking private lessons to enhance their practicum, and, even more importantly, they must participate in NMYO's community outreach efforts and donate the gift of music throughout the year at churches, senior centers and in other public places.

"Outreach allows students to meet people they might otherwise not get to meet, and to experience firsthand how important music is to others as a means of expression," he says. It's an experience, Dolan adds, that hones their "emotional response" to the music, which is a lesson that goes well beyond playing notes and learning techniques.

Community service is a large part of NMYO's mission, according to administrator Laura Heinrichs. "We seek to provide young musicians with exceptional ensemble training and opportunities for personal growth through musical performance and community service," she says. By all accounts, the organization has been successful in doing so.

Many students, Heinrichs says, go on to study music in college or to perform in professional orchestras or bands — and nearly all of them go on to make music an everlasting part of their lives.

Rita Ding, 16, an orchestra member from Boxford, has been playing an instrument since she was 4 years old. At 11, she was introduced to the oboe, and by 12 she was performing with NMYO.

"My school doesn't have an orchestra, so my oboe teacher, Kyoko Hida-Battaglia, suggested I audition for NMYO's intermezzo orchestra," Ding says. "She said it would be a chance to play more challenging music and meet more musicians. I just love the sound of the oboe with the orchestra and



O'SULLIVAN & COMPANY, P.C.
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS



Since 1990, our firm has delivered timely, accurate, customized services to a wide range of clients. At O'Sullivan and Company, we offer more than just innovative ideas for tax planning and business opportunities. We offer our commitment to helping you achieve your financial goals... with no hassles and no surprises.

"O'Sullivan & Company has been an integral part of our growth and success over the last 30 years through their capable advice regarding corporate and personal planning as well as business acquisitions. We highly recommend them."

—Charles Poor, Founder
Flagship Properties
North Andover, MA

Willows Office
871 Turnpike Street, Suite 200
North Andover, MA 01858
800-233-8888

- Tax Planning Services
- Accounting and Tax Preparation
- Business Valuation Services
- Financial Statement Preparation
- IRS and State Representation
- New Business Advisor Services

www.osullivancpa.com

Wood Renewal in Just One Day



Cabinets • Floors
Trim • Stairs • Interior Doors

Renew
Repair &
Revitalize
Your Wood

Before After



Before After



No Dust • No Mess • No Cost

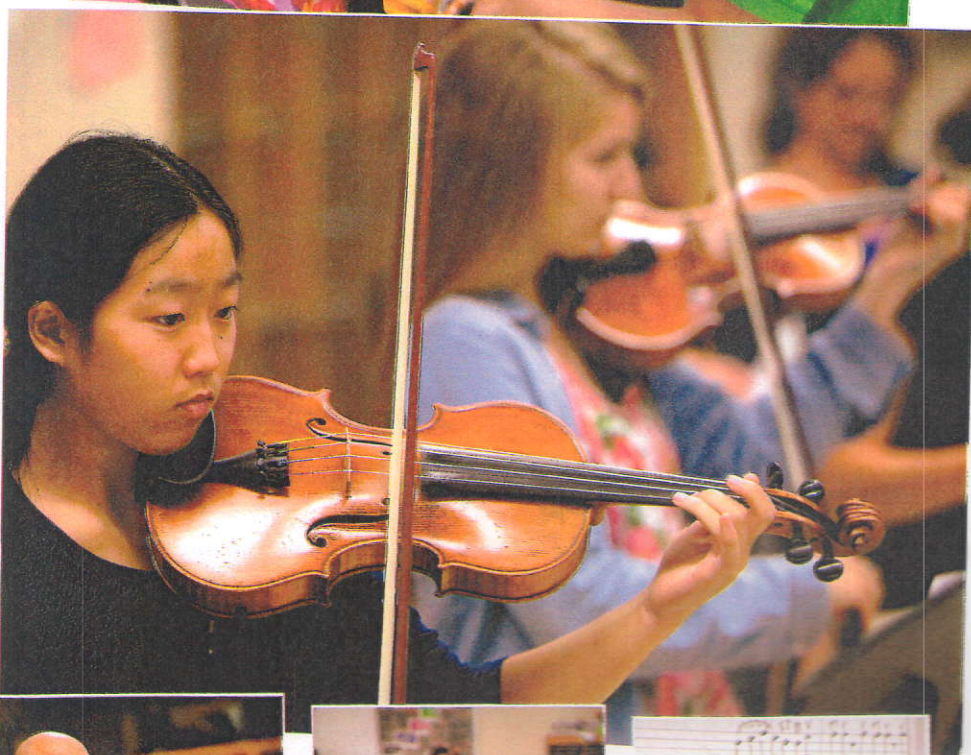
- Renew Cabinets, Floors, Door and Trim
- Fraction of the Cost to Replace
- Ask about our Color Change on Color

(603) 458-6305 NHance.com/merrimack

Call or click today to schedule a FREE In-Home Estimate.
Serving Merrimack County, NH.



action of
make up



have concentrated on this instrument ever since.”

Now in her senior year at Masconomet Regional High School in Topsfield, Ding has played with NMYO’s intermezzo and symphony orchestras, and with the wind ensemble. She says her involvement has given her courage, confidence and helped her to learn about accountability.

“NMYO has provided an encouraging environment for me to keep working and improving. Because I became accustomed to this environment, NMYO really prepared me to play first oboe in senior districts [a competitive, audition-only Massachusetts program where students in grades 9 to 12 have the opportunity to play with other top student musicians from throughout the state]. I wasn’t as nervous as I could have been, and I knew how loud I needed to play in order to be heard from the back of the orchestra.”

Ding is one of many students whose accomplishments reflect the value of NMYO, which is designed to provide supplemental music education to what is available in schools, as well to offer music education to students who are home-schooled.

In addition to performance opportunities and outreach, NMYO offers special programs such as “enrichment days,” when students work closely with guest conductors. Heinrichs says the organization is always looking to expand the program. “Last year, Portland Symphony Orchestra came to work with the students, and this year we are hoping to have a composition commissioned just for NMYO.”

Dolan is excited about the role the organization has played in the region, and will play in its future.

“It’s been a great cultural learning center for the North Shore. We hope that tradition will continue,” Dolan says.

mvm

NMYO’s “Winter Afternoon of Concerts” is scheduled for Dec. 8 at the Ipswich Performing Arts Center. Visit NMYO.org for more details on events and auditions, call (978) 309-9833 or email info@nmyo.org.

Conductors Walter Pavasaris (bottom left) and Abigail Haynes (bottom right), lead budding string performers whose passion and talent have earned them a place to grow musically at NMYO.