



Perfect Harmony

The Northeast Massachusetts Youth Orchestra gives budding musicians a place to learn and grow.

By Megan Johnson

THE SOUNDS OF CLASSICAL symphonies rebound throughout the hallowed halls of Masconomet Regional High School in Topsfield. But you won't find a professional orchestra behind those doors; in fact, you won't find many performers who are even old enough to vote.

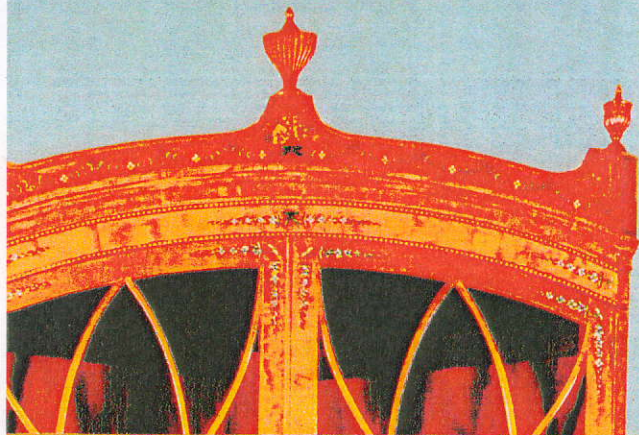
In the Northeast Massachusetts Youth Orchestras, 165 musicians from the age of six to 18 sit behind music stands, practicing their craft and hoping to make it to the upper echelon of classical music. And while no one really knows whether any of these young musicians will become the next Yo-Yo Ma, their participation in the orchestra isn't just



Sound the Horn: Student musicians practice their instruments during an NMYO rehearsal.

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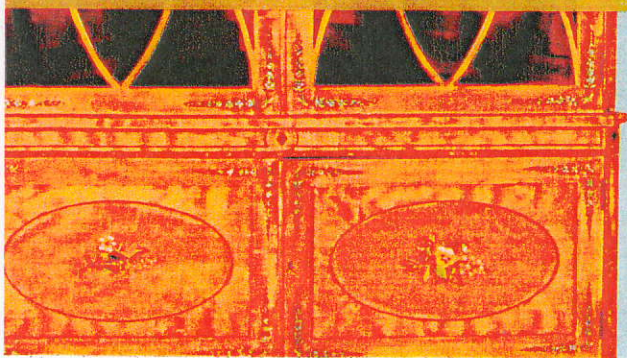
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Music



First String: Carly Moulton plays her violin during an NMYO practice session.

sitting through a 45-minute lesson once a week. For these kids, playing in one of the school's eight musical groups requires great diligence and a passion for performing music.

These young musicians come from all over the North Shore and beyond—some even travel from out of state—to perform in the orchestra. A few of them have spent their entire childhoods performing with the group. “What’s awesome is that since we have these groups that start when they’re really young, we have students who have been in our groups since they were six,” says Administrative Director Laura Heinrichs.

All performers must take music lessons at their schools, if they’re offered, but many also study privately. “We do want our students to take private lessons,” says Heinrichs. “We want to make sure that they are getting individual attention as well as being in an ensemble. It’s an important balance to have both aspects.”

Could one of these students be the next big thing in music? Perhaps, but that’s not the only goal in mind. The positive effects of studying music will stay with them forever, explains Heinrichs. “A lot of our students aren’t going to major in performance [in college], but they are definitely going to college and will be in a performance group,” says Heinrichs.

Carly Moulton is a 14-year-old violinist in the intermez-



Musical Minds: Concert master Callie Ierardi (left) in a rehearsal.

zo group who hopes to continue her musical study after high school graduation.

"I'd like to continue playing into college," says Carly, who hails from Rockport. "I've thought about majoring in music, but right now I'd probably say it'd be more recreational, more of a fun thing." She says one of her favorite parts of participating in the NMYO is the social aspect, particularly for young musicians from various towns on the North Shore who want to surround themselves with like-minded individuals. "I love having the chance to play with other people around my age who have the same love for string instruments, and people who I don't know and I can get to know from other areas."

The most elite group of performers is the Symphony Orchestra, made up of the school's most seasoned instrumentalists. Eighteen-year-old Callie Ierardi, who serves as the concert master in the symphony orchestra, has been through the entire NMYO program since age six. In the fall, she'll head off to the University of New Hampshire, where she intends to continue her study of music while exploring other career paths.

"It puts a little more pressure on me to be a strong leader," says Callie of her role as concert master. "And especially to be an example for the newer students; about

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Music School: Top, Gerry Dolan demonstrates a technique with a student. Above, students in Trudy Larson's class play their violins together.

how to conduct yourself in orchestra. I'm responsible for making sure [that] if we change a bowing or something about the music, everyone [knows it], and making sure everyone's kind of together in that respect. If there are solos, I'm usually the first one they ask [to perform]."

Callie takes private lessons once a week and says she clocks about an hour a day of practice herself. Then there are the lengthy practices for the symphony orchestra. "It is hard, sometimes, to have a full two-hour rehearsal without a break," says Callie. "It does feel kind of long, but at the

same time, it's kind of awesome [that] you can keep playing and not stop... It's completely worth it."

"Students in Symphony perform the great masterpieces of classical music, along with new and exciting music from today's composers," says music director Gerry Dolan. "For instance, this year, the Symphony will perform Beethoven's great masterpiece Fifth Symphony in C minor along with a new and challenging composition, 'Las Apariencias Enganan' by Robert Bradshaw."

Bradshaw, a well-known composer whose work has been performed at Lincoln Center in New York, serves as this year's composer in residence. He works with the young musicians and teaches them to compose their own music. Bradshaw even wrote some new pieces for the students to debut at their May concert.

"Students will write either rhythms or phrases or thoughts. [Bradshaw] incorporates what students give him. He'll come in and show them what he's doing and how he writes," says Dolan.

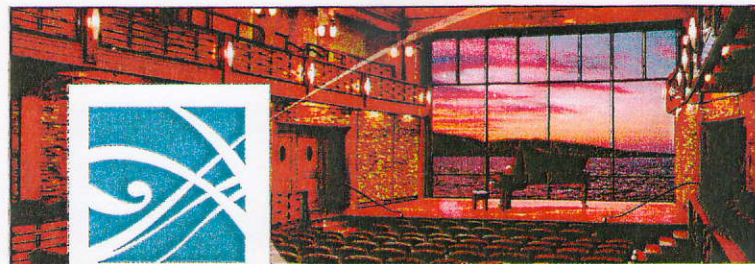
"I thoroughly enjoy working with young musicians," says Bradshaw, who has been involved in the NMYO since 1999. "They are very open to new ideas, which you have to be if you are working on new music."

While students learn to play in an ensemble, they are also taught how to use their talents to help others. Membership in the orchestra requires each student to utilize his or her talents within the community. For example, younger students participate in a Thanksgiving Basket project, for which they perform the Sunday before Thanksgiving, and profits are donated to helping families in need on the North Shore. More advanced groups are responsible for performing in the community for those who normally may not be able to attend concerts.

"Part of our mission statement is to not only give exceptional training, but to teach [our students] about the



Follow Me: Abigail Haynes conducting a practice session of the NMYO.



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-The New York Times

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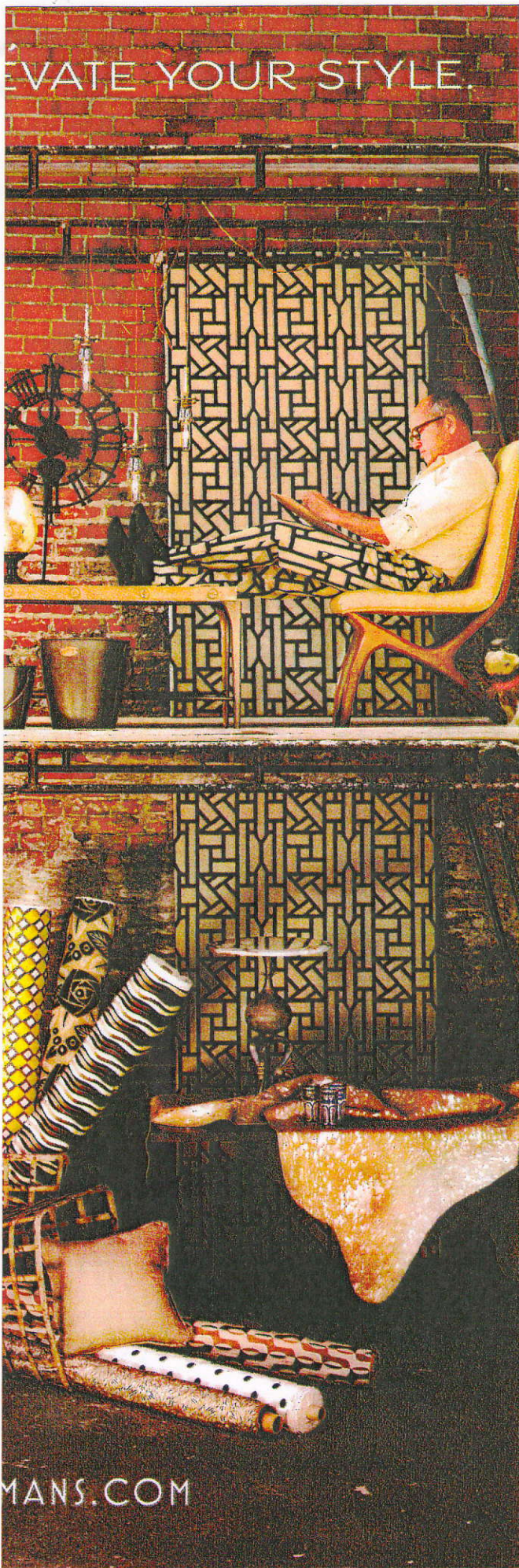
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Head of the Brass: Members of the orchestra's horn section at a rehearsal.

importance of using music in the community," says Heinrichs. "We're bringing music to people who might not get a chance to come to our concerts."

NMYO founder Trudy Larson not only created the orchestra, but also the non-profit organization Up With Music, a non-profit in the city of Lawrence that helps bring music programs into schools. Many students from the NMYO head to Lawrence after school and help teach the younger children. It's known as one of the NMYO students' favorite programs.

"Every year, the students who come back after [completing] that project [say] it's the high point of their year. Something significant has been turned on in their hearts," says Trudy. "For the kids in Lawrence, it's watching it happen to those who would never have the opportunity otherwise."

Twice a year, the students and teachers gather for a concert that features all eight ensembles showing off their hard work from throughout the year. This year's festivities take place on May 5. For the teachers, seeing the successes of their students is an incredible privilege.

"This is a very rewarding job," says Dolan. "I get to introduce some of the greatest music of the world to hardworking, bright, and enthusiastic young people and watch them grow through their struggles and achievements in performing this music. "The music and the students are what bring me back each year."

Bradshaw agrees. "I would say it is teaching children how to express their own ideas through music," he adds, when asked his favorite part of the job. "And even more importantly, teaching them that their voice is valuable and should be celebrated." nmyo.org

NMYO Spring Afternoon of Concerts

Gordon College Chapel, Wenham

5/5 at 2:30 p.m. Prelude, Overture, Inter., JFC, FC

5/5 at 5 p.m. Symphony, Wind Ensemble, SFC