

ACTIVEfamily

MAGAZINE

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Musica Dolce Spring Concert, May 3, 2009

Oh to be a child again and part of this joyful, dedicated ensemble! Fifty-five students, ages 7 to 18, participated in the May 3rd Musica Dolce Spring Concert; they were sensational and inspiring. Directed by Kathleen Curran Monroe, the concert featured 12 pieces performed by three ensembles:

- Festival Strings, which introduces young musicians, ages 7 to 10, to small ensemble performance.
- Youth String Ensemble, for intermediate level string players, ages 10-18.
- Chamber Players, for advanced musicians ages 13 to 18, who play the most challenging pieces.

Started in 1995 as an offshoot to Musica Dolce, the Westerly based classical music ensemble, Musica Dolce Youth String Ensemble gives promising young string musicians ensemble performance experience. Hailing from Southern Rhode Island and Southeastern Connecticut, students study with their own teachers (though many take lessons from Ms. Monroe) and practice with Musica Dolce.

Musica Dolce students give three annual concerts: the spring concert in May, a Halloween concert and a holiday concert in December. The concerts are free to the public. Festival String players rehearse for 6 weeks before the spring and holiday concerts. Youth String Ensemble musicians and Chamber Players practice each Monday during the school year and perform in all three concerts. Auditions are held annually prior to the concert season and tuition is \$210 per year. Scholarships are available.

Kathy Monroe has served as director since 1995. A Rhode Island native, she has a BA in Music Education from URI and her Masters in Cello Performance from the New England Conservatory in Boston, having studied with renowned cellist David Wells. She was a string specialist in many school systems throughout her career and performed with the Rhode Island Philharmonic. She is now principal cellist with Musica Dolce and performs with other string ensembles. She is a private cello instructor and advocate for incorporating string music programs into the public school system.



Festival Strings ensemble musicians warming up for the Musica Dolce Spring Concert. *photo: Greg Wostrel, gwcreative*

"When I am with Musica Dolce Festival Strings, I feel good because I am playing in a group. It's also fun because I am challenged by the music and I make new friends. I also like my music teacher, Kathy Monroe, she is a real character, loves to joke, and she is the conductor for Musica Dolce. I feel every kid should have this experience."

Johnathan Bied, Violin Player - Age 10

Spring Concert highlights included the toe-tapping traditional "Fiddler's Frolic" played by Festival Strings. The Youth String Ensemble performed Johann Sebastian Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" with confident delight. The Chamber Players offered a beautifully smooth rendition of Robert McCashin's "Variazioni La Follia", with origins tracing back to the 1600's.

As parents and kids will attest, Kathy makes this priceless ensemble experience fun! That good humor was evident while I watched the concert and witnessed a sparkling smile she offered to a young violinist, who smiled back with an appreciative glow. Though few kids enjoy practicing their instrument, they do look forward to Monday night practices with Kathy, "we all love music and enjoy being with one another and having fun!"

Older students are encouraged to play for private functions, such as birthday and anniversary parties. Students must charge a fee, however. "Though nominal, it's important that people pay for the students' services and appreciate how hard they've worked to achieve their skills. And students come to realize they are worthy of providing entertainment at a special family celebration...it's an inspiring experience for everyone involved."

Beyond the fun, however, is Kathy's earnest, respectful desire to teach...cello and ensemble performance, of course. But more than that, Kathy provides an atmosphere in which the combined music and ensemble

experience inspire self esteem, confidence, coordination and achievement. These are self-wrought gifts students earn and take with them through life.

And it's no coincidence, she believes, her students do well after high school. Towards the concert end, she introduced four Chamber Players, all with Kathy since they were kids. Each is going to college this fall: to University of Chicago to study physics, to Texas A&M University for biomedical science, to Plymouth State University for audiology, and to Northeastern University for electrical engineering.

Past graduating students have attended Boston College, Yale University, Brown University, Dartmouth College, Rhode Island College, Cornell University and many others. Kathy stays in touch with many of her former students, often attending their high school and college graduation parties and weddings.



Musica Dolce Chamber Players' stirring performance delighted the appreciative Spring Concert audience. *photo: Greg Wostrel, gwcreative*

"Music is the closest thing to Heaven," Kathy offered at the Spring Concert, "and one of the greatest gifts you can give to your children, one they'll appreciate more and more as they get older."

For additional information call 401-596-5225.

"When I think of the people I know whom I want to be like, you are at the top of my list. You've always inspired us to do our best...the life lessons that we've learned from you, such as responsibility, respect and courtesy, are lessons we'll carry with us throughout our college years and the rest of our lives...The most important thing we're taking with us is your love, and we're leaving our love with you..."

Caitlin