

Artscene



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MINI CONCERT: The Oakville Symphony Orchestra put on its 30-minute concert, titled *Viva Vivaldi*, this past weekend, organized by the orchestra's community outreach committee. In the top left photo: Jo-Anne Goyder helps Ava Steiging play the cello; on the right Leslie Ashworth performs for her young audience and below narrator Paul Michinson tells the story of Baroque composer Vivaldi.

Symphony shows it's more than a large orchestra

By Dominik Kurek
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

The Oakville Symphony Orchestra (OSO) is easily recognizable as a large group of well-dressed musicians who go on stage and play for two hours in front of a large audience.

However, the group does more than just put on large orchestra concerts. It strives to reach out to the community, educate people in music and show them classical music is fun.

To help it do so, the orchestra has a team of dedicated musicians who volun-

teer their time to make it happen. The group puts on a series of events all-year round that are free to audiences, mostly children and youths, in the hopes of entertaining and educating.

There is a cost to the orchestra to do this, but the end results are worth it for the group.

"It helps the symphony because people like to know the orchestra plays a part in the community," said Ian Morrison, a member of the symphony's community outreach committee. "The orchestra plays music for fun and to entertain others."

But aside from entertainment, the outreach committee's other goal is to educate.

The outreach committee is the brain-child of its founder and chairperson Irene DeWolf, who, with several other OSO members, including Morrison, formed it in 2004. The following year, the orchestra put on its first outreach concert and currently does about six such events per year. These concerts target children and youth and there is no cost to attend them.

Since the committee formed, it has been successful in achieving its goals, Morrison said, mostly because of the enthusiasm of the committee members and the reception it receives.

"Our product, if you can call it that, is very popular with parents," Morrison said.

The outreach committee organizes a series of mini-concerts, which are staged in the lobby of The Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts. At those concerts, children are exposed to various types of instruments. Each 30-minute performance targets a particular instrument or series of instruments, such as strings or brass. The mini-concerts can also target certain composers or showcase the work of the conductor.

"The point of this is to show kids there are different instruments and some play high and some play low, some play loud, some play fast," Morrison said. "It gives them a taste of what can happen. And hopefully, when they're a bit older, they'll come to the September concert, which lasts for about an hour."

The September show is the OSO's annual Young People's Concert, which features a full orchestra, but it showcases the talents of young people who perform as soloists. The young soloists are exceptional musicians, Morrison said.

The committee also puts on various family-friendly concerts, such as a Christmas show and various mini-concerts. The committee does in-school programming, visiting approximately four schools throughout the year, both elementary and high school.

"The high school students react in a surprising way," Morrison said. "At the end of the concert, they're full of ques-

tions and they want to hang around and talk to the musicians."

There are some hurdles to get around as well when trying to arrange a school presentation. There are scheduling issues between the schools and the musicians and there's also competition.

"We're just one outfit trying to get into the schools," Morrison said. "We have lots of competition."

The outreach committee pays the musicians who come out to put on the presentations, ranging from approximately three to six players at a time. The musicians are usually OSO member, but when scheduling

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