

Published June 21st, 2023

Young musicians bring classical music to life at Moraga backyard concert

Submitted by Nadia Liu & YPSO parents



From left: Grace Liao, Henry Stroud, Claire Topper, Jonathan Altman, Liam Young-Skeen, Marilyn Jia, Arianna Muse. Photo: Courtesy of Fangran Zheng Photo provided

On a sunny and warm Sunday afternoon on April 30 in Moraga, music enthusiasts were treated to a delightful outdoor concert hosted by a Moraga resident. The event featured talented young musicians from the Young People's Symphony Orchestra (YPSO) and the Young Chamber Players (YCP), and was jointly organized by the two organizations. The concert provided a wonderful opportunity for families with young children and neighbors to enjoy high-quality classical music in a relaxed and welcoming environment.

The program for the joint YPSO/YCP chamber concert was a diverse collection of musical pieces, ranging from works of classical pieces by Arcangelo Corelli (arranged by Arianna Muse for flute and violin, performed by Ms. Muse on flute and Marilyn Jia on violin), Antonín Dvořák (Henry Stroud on Violin 1, Jonathan Altman on Violin 2, Liam Young-Skeen on Viola, and Claire Topper on Cello), and a world premiere of a piano piece titled "Dream" (composed and performed by Grace Liao).

Attendees from ages 4 to 94 came to relax and enjoy the classical music in the beautiful garden filled with blooming native California flowers, which created a serene and intimate experience.??

All agreed that the concert was a success. "It is so wonderful to see these young people enjoying classical music," said the hostess. A mother commented, "I have longed to take my daughter to a classical music concert, but she can never sit still. Today is the first in-person concert my daughter gets to experience classical music in such an un-intimidating and enjoyable way."?

Following the concert, a small reception was held where community members and YPSO/YCP musicians could meet and mingle. The musicians echoed similar enthusiasm as the attendees: "It is very fun for me and for all of us to play this famous piece," said Mr. Young-Skeen, who started viola when he was 11 and piano when he was 2.??

YPSO, the oldest youth orchestra in California, and the oldest independent youth orchestra in the nation, was founded in 1936 by Jessica Marcelli, a woman who forged her own path, because female conductors were not as accepted as normal in these roles back then. Her journey echoes the journey of every YPSO student, finding the strength to believe in oneself and creating something beautiful along the way. YPSO is now in its 86th season, and continues to foster the talents of its 102 young musicians, who are also hard-working, dedicated students in the midst of AP exams, sports and debate club events, auditions, community service activities, and multiple music performances.

YCP was established as a student-led chamber music organization by Grace Liao, a Campolindo High School sophomore and a former student of Pamela Freund-Striplen, founder of the Gold Coast Chamber Players established in 1987. Freund-Striplen supports YCP as their artistic mentor. Carrying the torch passed down from Gold Coast, with its legacy of service to the community, YCP is now leading the way to ensure that classical music continues to thrive in younger generations, by bringing chamber concerts to local homes and communities in the Lamorinda area. This was YCP's second concert and first concert collaborating with YPSO.

At the end of the concert, Freund-Striplen applauded the young and talented musicians. She pointed out what a huge undertaking it was for YPSO and YCP to turn these outreach community concerts into a reality. She hoped for continued support from the community to bolster these high schoolers' endeavors to enrich Lamorinda. This support could include attending concerts, contributing financially, donating refreshments, and helping to organize events.

To find upcoming events, including the upcoming YPSO Spring concert and the Summer Music Camp for third- to eighth-graders jointly organized by the YCP and Campolindo High School instrumental music program, visit their respective websites: ypsomusic.org (YPSO) and <https://sites.google.com/view/youngchamberplayers> (YCP).

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