

Kudos to those music teachers

By Jim Eadie

There is no doubt that music permeates and becomes an integral part of cultures, our communities and ourselves. A few weeks ago the Music Festival, one of the longest running music festivals in Ontario, has again powerfully demonstrated that formal music study is alive and well here in North Hastings. Hundreds of students from age 4 to 87 assembled in the various classes to perform publicly, often for the first time, in front of an audience, to hear each other play or sing, and hear what the professional adjudicator has to say. For four solid days, the public was invited to become part of the process, to hear high caliber music in performance, and learn by listening to the words of the professional adjudicator ... all for free!

Still considered unusual, the local festival is non-competitive in structure, allowing each students contribution to be performed in supportive environment with the opportunity to receive a fair and valuable critique of their abilities and performance skills. Some of the students will be taking their Royal Conservatory of Music exams later in the year, and use this opportunity to try out their selections of music in a public forum.

Participant's contributions ranged from guitar, piano, and vocal, to school choirs.

As music teacher Cate Meder noted, learning music is often a very solitary activity, studying with a teacher and practicing for many hours at home following these <https://www.revitalizingdowntowns.net/my-top-3-tips-for-learning-to-play-piano/> top tips for learning piano, for example. The festival is a place to take everything the student has learned, and now share it with an audience. Is it nerve-racking? Absolutely! Years of study and thousands of hours of practice .. all down to 3 or 4 minutes. I know. As a young person I studied piano, and played in local festivals. So did both of my children.

Some of my notes taken during the festival reflect the caliber of music that you missed if you did not attend. Piano/vocal adjudicator Colleen Morrison:

"Great job, and well prepared! It is so much fun to sing with somebody else!"

"Excellent work, very musical. You are really a fine pianist!"

"Really fine work. Relax and enjoy it. Again ... really good playing."

"Very well played, well prepared ... good job."

"You are a very fine musician! Fine work guys ... it's a pleasure to hear such good playing. Kudos to your teachers!"

Yes. Kudos to those teachers.

Following the festival, Morrison took a few minutes to speak to me about what she had just heard in North Hastings.

"You have some really good teachers here," she told me quietly and sincerely, as she looked me straight in the eye. "I saw some great performances, these students are well prepared, and very well taught!"

New to this years festival was the "Noon Hour Concert Series", providing a free community opportunity to hear high caliber performances by talented local musicians. Cate Meder (pianist) and C.T. Rowe (violinist) collaborated in presenting three different classical programs that honestly left the audiences moved and inspired.

The gala performance and awards "Festival of Stars" on Thursday April 30 at Bancroft Pentecostal Tabernacle featured selected performances from the festival and guest artist Ms. Caitlin O'Connor.

Great work festival committee: Valerie Switzer, Cate Meder, Trish Estabrooks, Jacqueline McLean, Dianne Winmill, and Barb Tenthorey!

To the numerous individuals, businesses and municipalities who financially support the festival ... money well invested!

Is music important? Why study music? Johns Hopkins School of Education makes the case clearly:

"Music gives us unique means of expressing ourselves, capturing our passions and emotions, and allowing us to explore new ideas, subject matter, cultures and communities. Music brings joy to every aspect of ourselves."

I couldn't have said it better. This four-day festival was time well spent for me.