

Charlotte Symphony

SYMPHONY IGNITES IMAGINATIONS WITH “EXPLORATIONS THROUGH MUSIC”

The thump of a big drum evokes a “lumbering” elephant; the shimmer of a rain stick calls forth the spray from its trunk. With help from musicians Julie Johnson and Geoff Whitehead, third graders in Ms. Richmond’s class at Pinewood Elementary School are performing poems about animals – reciting the words they have written while accompanying themselves on an array of percussive instruments with colorful names like “thunder tube” and “ocean drum.”

Johnson and Whitehead, teaching artists in the Charlotte Symphony’s *Educational Explorations through Music* program, have brought music into the third grade classrooms of Pinewood Elementary on Seneca Place, teaching eight and nine-year-olds how the sounds of instruments can tell a story or create a picture or bring language to life.

Now in its eleventh year, *Educational Explorations through Music* is one of the Symphony’s multiple in-school programs designed to place the study of music into the broader educational landscape. Working with the third, fourth, and fifth grades at Pinewood and the fourth grade at Nathaniel Alexander Elementary School, teaching artists link music to literacy, enabling children to listen more intently and express themselves more creatively. Students examine music and words and how they relate, listen to and analyze musical scores that are descriptive in nature, and explore the unique sound qualities of traditional symphonic instruments, as well as percussive instruments from all over the world.

“The reason that I really like this program for our kids is that it gives them an opportunity that, because of their economic situation, they wouldn’t have otherwise,” says Dorothy Glick, music teacher at Nathaniel Alexander. Nathaniel Alexander is a Title I, or high-poverty, school. “My students haven’t had the chance to participate in many activities outside of school. When it comes to testing, like the fourth-grade writing test, it’s hard for them to make connections to other things (such as the arts). This program helps them make those connections, between poetry and music, etc.”

Provided to the children free of charge, *Educational Explorations through Music* is funded this year with a grant from the Arts & Science Council and corporate support from Nordstrom.

Glick gave her students a pre-test and a post-test to see what they had learned from the Symphony program. Students listened to Tchaikovsky’s music for *The Nutcracker* and wrote descriptions of what they heard. “I noticed that in the post-test, the kids were much more elaborate and more descriptive,” says Glick. “They used similes and metaphors.” And they were listening on a much more sophisticated level. “They hear the different layers. They’re noticing that the flutes are doing this and the clarinets are doing that. They can really hear the instruments. It’s very exciting for them.”

Back at Pinewood, Ms. Richmond’s third grade class applauds as an “inky” squid tackles an “enormous” shark, with a bang and a sizzle and a whoosh.



Julie Johnson assists a student at Pinewood Elementary.

Ticket Info

For more information about the Charlotte Symphony’s education programs, visit www.charlottesymphony.org/Education.asp or call 704-514-5110.