

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

[Home](#) | [Read Online](#) | [Archive](#) | [Links](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Contact](#)

[printer friendly](#)

[download pdf](#)

Published November 26th, 2008

Moraga Elementary Schools Hear Symphonic Sounds

By T. Rowe Audley



Rheem students participate in "Music-In-The-Schools" Photo Andy Scheck

At all three Moraga elementary schools this year, the phrase "music in the schools" takes on a new meaning thanks to The California Symphony. "Music-In-The-Schools" is the official title for The California Symphony's outreach program to Contra Costa Schools. Symphony Director, Barry Jekowsky, began the program in 1992 from his belief that music should be "accessible to young people."

Symphony grants and fundraising provide the means to run the "Music-In-The-Schools" program. "There are a lot of schools though," says Elaina Birnbaum, Director of Operations and Education for the Symphony. Her job is to spread the program over as many schools as possible. "So when an elementary school can offer to offset costs, it helps a lot," said Birnbaum. Moraga schools are using a 2006-07 Art & Music block grant to cover almost half of the \$11,500 program cost this year. It's a smart expenditure when you consider the documented impact.

"The most frequently asked question by school children is: 'When did you start playing your instrument?'" says Birnbaum. For 95% of California Symphony musicians, the answer is: "in elementary school." "We are delighted that Music in the Schools is back at Rheem School," says Rheem School Principal, Elaine Frank. The school hopes to bring the program back every 4-6 years so all students get an opportunity to learn from the program during their time at Rheem. "It's an amazing program," says Frank.

Selected symphony musicians, along with music teachers, encourage children to interact with instruments during a series of interactive 30-minute sessions. Students touch, see, and hear brass, percussion, woodwinds and stringed instruments. Children learn to name different instruments, recognize musical patterns, and play musical games to better understand how different sounds are produced. To teach more effectively, the program splits the children into two age groups: K-1st grades and 2nd-5th grades.

Nicky Roosevelt, 2nd horn for the California Symphony, has been dedicated to the "Music-In-The-Schools" program since its inception over 15 years ago. She teaches both age groups and reports that her "show" keeps evolving, depending

upon what captivates kids. Today Nicky and her music education partner use a story narrative to interest the older kids. They might also play Mary Had a Little Lamb on water bottles to illustrate sound or have a "Low Off" competition between brass instruments to guess which plays the lowest note.

With the younger grades, a "good listener" puppet helps the children identify emotions they feel when they listen to different music. Roosevelt explains that "this helps them recognize the possible purpose behind a piece of music." Roosevelt is rewarded when children realize that "the music they hear in the movies is played by live people and that they could be one of those musicians some day."

The Music-In-The-Schools Program will continue through April at Rheem Elementary School. For more information on the program, visit <http://www.californiasymphony.org/content/music-in-the-schools.asp>.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[Home](#) | [Read Online](#) | [Archive](#) | [Links](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Contact](#)

[back to top](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA