

Young musicians bring classical music to life at Moraga backyard concert



Photo provided

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

Submitted by Nadia Liu & YPSO parents

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 com-

mented, "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).

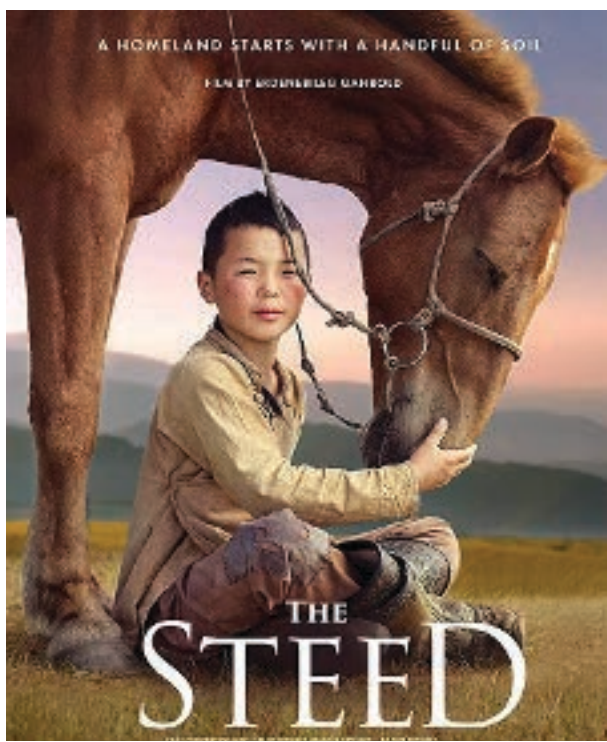


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'The Steed' – An epic adventure in the steppes of central Asia

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"This poem was taught in school during the socialist era and learning it in high school gave me a lot of inspiration," Ganbold explained, reminiscing the lyricism and realism of the poetry of that era.

Ganbold, as well as producers Alexa Khan and Trevor Doyle have a passion for the traditions and uniqueness of the Mongolian nomadic culture. Mongols are one of the few nomadic, or semi-nomadic civilizations existing today – with the Tuareg and the Maasai in Africa – and are rabidly moving away from nomadic life. Climate change is also affecting livelihood and pastoralism and Ganbold also stressed

his desire to remind individuals and the world's youth to love the environment and be good caretakers for animals and the land or they won't have a future worth living.

The movie took three years to make. Three thousand horses were on set brought by local herders. Ganbold explained that animal wranglers were not required, as every crew member was an experienced horseman and herder, often stepping in to wrangle during the course of shooting. Rusty himself was, in fact, played by three horses: one that was affectionate and emotional, one that was exceedingly athletic and one that was more aggressive in nature. All three were

specifically trained for their aspect of a role that would have asked too much from one individual horse. The horses were trained from birth. Ariunbold Erdenebayar, who plays Chuluun is not a trained actor; he lives in the countryside in very much the same lifestyle as the boy he portrays. This beautiful and emotional movie is suitable for all audiences.

"The Steed" opens at the Orinda Theatre on June 23 for at least a week. It is part of the International Film Showcase that presents a different acclaimed foreign film almost every month. Tickets at <https://www.orindamovies.com/>

Stanley OM team takes first in Spontaneous competition at World Finals

Submitted by Sejal Choksi-Chugh

Seven Stanley Middle School seventh-graders – Sanika Khamkar, Lauren Brekke, Shriya Lind, Sophia Moore, Raini Chugh, Aleah Mathai-Jackson and David Siu – were big winners at the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals in East Lansing, Michigan held at the end of May. The

Stanley Middle School Team B took first place in the Spontaneous portion of the competition and took fifth place overall. While the long-term problem requires months to solve, the spontaneous problem involves solving a surprise verbal, engineering, or combination problem in under 10 minutes. Fifty-four international teams competed against Stanley in their division and problem. Congratulations!

Photo provided



Moraga Lions present Achievement Awards

Submitted by Raymond Casabonne

The Moraga Lions again gave out its annual Achievement Awards to the local middle schools: Joaquin Moraga, Saint Perpetua, Stanley and Orinda Intermediate.

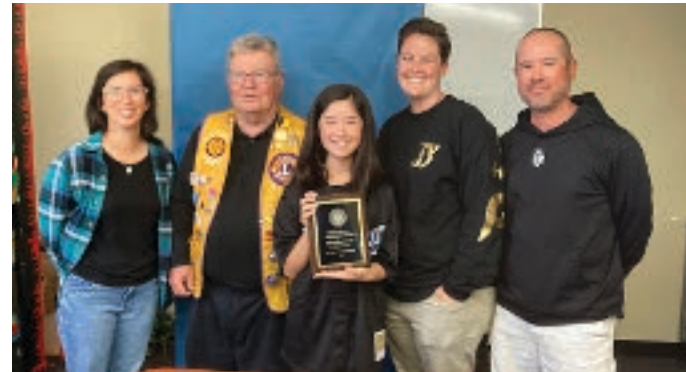
Photos provided



St. Perpetua: Amy O'Connor, Dan Hagan, Emma O'Connor, Ben O'Connor



JM: Gabriela Alvarez (counselor), Jessica McDevitt, Debbie Standing, Dan Hagan, Anika Kesiraju, Christy Marin, Kristen Anderson, Mike Plant



St. Perpetua 2: Nicole Damhesel, Dan Hagan, Emily Damhesel, Heather Aguiar, Anthony Damhesel



Stanley: Alice Cyr (science), Victoria Shegoian (history), Brian Mangold (Principal), Tobias Leung (parent), Antonia Lau (parent), Leo Leung (sibling), Eddie Leung (Moraga Lions Award winner), Dan Hagan, Layla Epperson (Moraga Lions Award winner), Liana Epperson (parent), Jen Montague (school counselor), Tiffany Sullivan (school counselor), Aaron Baker (home ec)



OIS: Suzy Kisch (teacher), Derek LaMarche, Kayla LaMarche, Dan Hagan, Martine Catherine Neasmith, Warwick Neasmith, Michelle Meyers (counselor)