Seasons Greetings and Best Wishes & Peace for the New Year

MINSTREL NOTES

December 2013

Minstrel Foundation Celebrates 15 Years!!

The Minstrel Foundation for Music & Arts Advancement was founded in 1998 by a group of avid enthusiasts to provide funding to music programs in the Regent Park area of Toronto. In the early years, the Foundation supported the music program at Dixon Hall at a time of cutbacks and founded the neighbouring Regent Park School of Music to look after the many children in the area who could not be accommodated at Dixon Hall. Today, 15 years later, the Foundation supports a number of music programs in disadvantaged areas across the GTA and music camps in the summer, March Break and at Christmas. The Foundation also provides scholarship funding at the advanced and university level to deserving students. Through the first 15 years, the Foundation has raised over $1.7 million to support its programs through the dedication and hard work of a group of volunteers and the generous sponsors and benefactors who have embraced our mission.

Our Programs in 2013

Camps

- The Dixon Hall Music School Overnight Camp at Hart House Farm
- The National Music Camp in Orillia
- The Dixon Hall Music School March Break Camp
- The Heather Bryant Christmas Music Camp at Hart House Farm
- Music at Port Milford
- Harbourfront Camps
- Humber College Community Jazz Summer Programs

Throughout the Year

- The Dixon Hall Music School
- University Settlement House Music School
- The Regent Park Music School
- Pia Bouman School of Ballet
- Canadian Children's Opera Company After School Program
- Humber College Community Jazz Program
- The Hammer Band From Violence to Violins

Scholarships

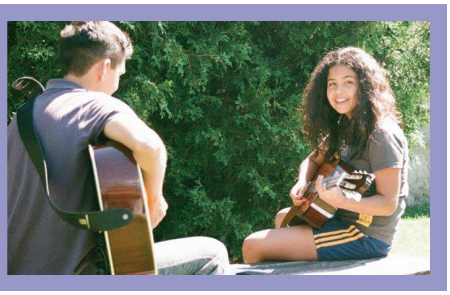
- Post-Secondary Financial Assistance
- University Tuition

What it all means!

Lana Ran Du is an "Alum" of the Dixon Hall Music School. In January 2013, she sent a letter to us telling us what the lessons, camps, and support meant for her over eight years of growing up in Regent Park. She recounts how the music program gave her "A community where I can feel joy and feel loved by so many people, it gave me a talent that made me feel like I was 'worth something' and that I can be proud of myself despite my socioeconomic status." Lana goes on to end "Thank you for making it all possible, you've impacted my young and adult life in a meaningful and fantastic way!"

The entire text of this letter from a remarkable young woman is on the Minstrel Foundation website where you can read just what life-changing and life-enhancing events your donations provide.

You're welcome, Lana.



Savour, Sip & Celebrate

More than 150 people braved the winter chill for Minstrel's winter gala, "Savour, Sip & Celebrate" at Enoch Turner Schoolhouse on Dec. 3, 2013. Guest emcee Beth Harrington was on hand to carry the festivities forward as patrons feasted on gourmet cheeses, sliders, dumplings and assorted goodies including Peninsula Ridge award winning wines, single malt scotch tastings from Glenfiddich, and holiday cocktails from Luksusowa Luxury Potato Vodka.

Entertainment was provided by the Humber College Community Music School Quartet, a super-talented foursome from local high schools. From Violence to Violins sent the Hammer Band Young Musicians and their director Moshe Hammer spoke briefly about the sensational growth in this marvelous program and Minstrel's role in it. Then it was time for Minstrel Foundation "alumni" Thompson Egbo-Egbo, graduate of Humber College and the Berklee School of Music, to serenade with his own compositions and local musical star Matthew Brown (this summer in Stratford, this winter in "Killer Business" at the Next Stage Festival in TO) to sing seasonal tunes. The final act was 8 year old Jason Li, from the Dixon Hall Music School, who dazzled the crowd with his classical piano style.

The evening ended with a raffle and silent auction that included a citrine and gold necklace, fine wines and restaurant evenings. Smart bidders snapped up a week on the Spanish Riviera, a week in Scottsdale, AZ, golfing in South Carolina and a week on the Algarve, in Portugal. Ole!

At the event, we also announced a donation of $1000 from Humber College to the Foundation. We have assisted several students in Humber's Community Music Programs with scholarships and will continue to do so.

Special thanks go to the evening's sponsors: Unilock, Holcim, Cassels Brock, Navillus Gallery, the Cornerstone 52 Foundation and the Gerry and Caren Ruby Foundation. Additional sponsors were Fortune's Fine Jewelry who provided the gorgeous necklace for the raffle, Aird & Berlis, Long and McQuade, Warner Music Canada, Sony Music, Manuel and Cheryl Buchwald, and the Honourable Margaret McCain.

Thompson Egbo-Egbo & Matthew Brown

Jason Li (Dixon Hall)

Cathy Mitro, Kirk MacDonald and
The Humber College Community Music School Quartet

The Hammer Band – From Violence to Violins

Recent Awards

It's always important to reward exceptional talents and we're fortunate to have patrons who want to celebrate young people's efforts in a special way. This year's scholarships and awards are no exception.

Daniel Guerrette, a Grade 10 student at the Etobicoke School of Arts, has a CV that takes up two full pages and includes study and performance on drums, along with vocal and instrumental study. That all said, Daniel now has the Hagood Hardy Protégé Award, the Cassels Brock Music Award to continue his studies throughout the year at Humber College, and a Minstrel Foundation grant for his extra study in the summer.

Matt Lagan, a student of the Humber Community Music program is considered an outstanding saxophonist by his teachers and mentors. Matt has spent the past four years working diligently to perfect his talents and a Cassels Brock Music Award assisted him to participate in Humber's extended summer study and mentorship program.

Maxwell Tong isn't a household word yet, but just wait a few years. This tiny dynamo, only 11 years old, has already performed at the Kiwanis Festival and assorted other piano competitions. The Fan Po Chu Award assisted him with private lessons with Gloria Saarinen to head towards his goal of professional study by 2019. Way to go, Maxwell.

Incidentally, Minstrel members may recall Maxwell's equally talented sister, Tonia, was a Cassels Brock Music Award winner a few years back.

Anoop and Jinu Isac are two exceptional students in the Humber Community Music Program and Minstrel is delighted to be able to assist them in their continuing studies of composition and theory. Catherine Mitro, Director of the HCMS, describes them as "outstanding" in technical ability that "wows" professional musicians. The Minstrel Foundation is providing tuition at the Humber Community Music School for the 2013–2014 academic year.

Canadian Children's Opera Company

We are thrilled to be a major sponsor of The Canadian Children's Opera Company "Operation Kids" outreach program. This exciting program reaches hundreds of children through six in-school programs, as well as teacher workshops. This terrific outreach project helps to provide musical experience for kids from some of Toronto's most needy neighbourhoods. Your donations make you part of the fun and learning. Want to know more? Go on their website www.canadianchildrensopera.com.

Summer Camp programs

Summer camp is a Canadian tradition that many of us remember fondly. But summer camp costs and, if you're musically inclined, it costs even more. But Minstrel funds help dozens of kids to enjoy the benefits of outdoors, crafts, swimming, and musical training in specialized programs.

In the summer of 2013, $13,245 in Minstrel funds sent 32 youngsters to the Harbourfront Camp for days of fun and day trips to local events.

Minstrel gave the Dixon Hall Music School $10,025 for its summer camp program that includes a one week sleepover at Hart House Farm.

Seven extra-talented kids spent 2 weeks at the National Music Camp in Orillia where they ran, camped, and swam as well as improving their musical talents in master classes with professional musicians. Minstrel funded the cost of $5,330.

We also provided 17 students with the funds for their Royal conservatory exams, for a total of $2,375. We just learned that those students all made well over 88 % on their exams. Great Work, kids!!!

Heather Bryant Christmas Music Camp

Santa Claus came early with stockings stuffed with a one week in the country for 15 youngsters from the Dixon Hall Music School. The fireplaces at Hart House Farm will crackle with toasted marshmallows and there will be plenty of sugarplums and musical mashups. Thanks to generous donations on behalf of Heather Bryant for this outing which is named in her honour.

From Violence to Violins

We have been supporting this very worthy program founded and directed by Moshe Hammer for a few years now. This year, the Foundation awarded them $10,000 to expand their program in two more schools in the Jane/Finch corridor.

National Bank Night Out Event

What a thrill for 10 music students from the inner city! They, along with a parent, got to attend a private concert by the Canadian Tenors sponsored by the National Bank as part of their "give back to the community" project. The National Bank Night Out was a celebration for the bank's own clients and staff but Minstrel students and parents were given front row seats, had a special backstage meeting with the Tenors (with photos) and a fabulous time was had by everyone. Thank you National Bank. It was an evening 10 children will remember forever.

And the Latest…

The Minstrel Foundation Board met December 11, 2013, to vote on new projects for the winter. The most exciting news was learning that the net proceeds from our Savour, Sip & Celebrate evening was $58,000. Thanks to all our supporters who turned out and helped us meet the needs of some very deserving kids.

The December Board meeting approved $25,000 to University Settlement House for their bursary program that will provide lessons for 69 students, continuing our long term commitment to their excellent music program. We also donated $7,000 to the Pia Bouman School of Ballet and Creative Dance's bursary fund to assist students as they progress to more advanced levels. The Regent Park School of Music was granted $5,000 for an experimental class of 24 students using iPads to learn basic music principles such as timing, rhythm and ensemble work.

Our Mission

The Minstrel Foundation's mission is to provide children at risk or in need of financial support the learning experience, real accomplishment and adult bonding that music and the arts can bring to their lives. Your support truly makes a difference to young lives and helps them belong and feel good about themselves. Music education not only enhances a child's academic performance in math and science, it also engenders teamwork, communication and other social skills that are critical to success as an adult.

Many Thanks to Our Committee and Volunteers

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