

Aircraft museum sets anniversary celebration

Celebrate Yankee Air Museum's 21st anniversary with a big band dinner-dance on Saturday, Sept. 21 and a free open house with pancake breakfast on Sunday, Sept. 22. Both events will raise funds for the Belleville museum, which exhibits flyable and static aircraft and houses a gift shop.

It's located at Willow Run Airport, corner of Belleville and Ecorse roads.

"Casablanca Night" will include a dinner at 7:30 p.m., music by Al Townsend's Courtiers and a cash bar. Tickets

are \$35. Black and white clothing or military uniforms from that era is the suggested attire. The pancake breakfast will start at 9 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 22. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children, 12 and under. The open house runs 9 a.m.-4 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 22. Admission is free to the museum and gift shop.

The event will include face painting, aircraft tours, refreshments, photographs, used book sales and museum tours.

For tickets or more information, call the museum at (734) 483-4080.

HUTCHINSON

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ing positions during the same period.

Of the teachers surveyed, 22 percent anticipate they will retire in the next five years. Most school systems already are having difficulty finding qualified string teachers to fill openings.

When Erich graduates he should find a job market that welcomes him with open arms. This is great for Erich. But what are the larger implications for our culture and why should the rest of us be concerned?

So much of the world's great music involves string instruments. The sound of strings is the heart of the orchestral sound.

Think of the score to the movie *Star Wars* or *Indiana Jones* without the sound of the orchestra and its soaring strings. Listen to the power and the beauty of the great symphonies by Beethoven, Brahms or Tchaikovsky. The great composers wrote for the symphony orchestra because it is so powerful and expressive.

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Research tells us that there is a whole list of behavioral, developmental, social and spiritual benefits of studying music. But my colleagues and I in the Detroit Symphony did not pursue studying music because it was good for our brains or taught us discipline. We did it because we love music.

When we were all struggling with our grief during the tragic week of Sept. 11, the art museums in New York City opened their doors to the public free of charge as a "sanctuary of respite and contemplation." When I heard that, it reminded me the arts, and especially music, provide us with a sanctuary from the clutter and clutter of everyday life.

FINDING TEACHERS

We have some difficult issues to confront if we are going to find the talented and committed string teachers we need to give all students access to studying string instruments. Although surveys show student enrollment in school orchestra programs has steadily been on the increase, still only 18 percent of school districts across the country offer orchestra instruction while 98 percent offer band.

Even greater is the concern that a strong inequality of access still exists among students of different socioeconomic levels. For the last 10 years string instruction

has been offered mostly in the wealthier suburbs. Because students who go into the teaching profession tend to want to teach in areas like the ones they grew up in, it becomes even more difficult for rural and urban communities to recruit and retain well-qualified teachers. Ben Pruitt, the Instrumental Music Supervisor for the Detroit Public Schools, confirms: "We need to fill music positions period. All music is on the critical needs list in the Detroit Public Schools."

When I questioned Erich about the kind of position he would like, he said Berkley High School — where he went to school. He also listed a number of other districts, all of them suburban schools with well-established string programs.

Another promising future string teacher is Cecelia Sharpe. Cecelia is a product of Detroit Public Schools. She has a bright, friendly personality and is a sophomore at Wayne State University as a music education major. She plays the cello as her primary instrument and wants to teach strings in the public schools.

When I asked her what kind of position she would like she said: "I want to teach in the Detroit schools. I want to give back some of what I've been given. I want (students) to know that with focus and determination it is possible for them to play any type of music on any instrument that they may desire."

Another critical issue is that training for new string teachers needs to be more comprehensive. In Michigan's public schools, certified music teachers may teach K-12 music classes. Certification is not specialized. Of the string teaching positions filled last year only 62 percent were filled with

teachers whose primary instrument was a string instrument.

Most universities only require one semester of string instrument training for certification. Erich already has a head start. His primary instrument is the cello but he also plays the other string instruments.

Obviously there is no simple solution to these problems, but all of us who are professional musicians and music teachers have a role to play. We have to continue to develop programs so more students have access to this wonderful resource.

Some programs already exist that give students a chance to teach early in their development. Erich had the opportunity to take a class called Student Service Learning. This program gave Erich a chance to work for 10 weeks with senior citizens and 10 weeks as a teaching assistant working with students.

Giving more advanced students a chance to discover the joys of teaching is the main purpose of a new initiative by ASTA/NSOA called the National String Project Consortium. This is a program where young students, beginning in the third grade, study string instruments at a local college campus.

It is important to give our developing students and future teachers diverse performing and teaching experiences. Youth orchestras like the Detroit Sinfonia and the Detroit Civic Orchestra, sponsored by the Detroit Symphony draw from many different kinds of communities, including Detroit.

We need to carefully encourage and nurture Erich, Cecelia and many more talented young people like them to enter the teaching profession. The cultural foundation of our society depends on how well we introduce the next generation to this wonderful sanctuary of music.

Marshall "Lerry" Hutchinson was named 2001 Michigan String Teacher of the Year. The Farmington Hills resident is now in his 20th season as a bassist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Hutchinson is one of the guest columnists appearing in a series that introduces *Observer & Eccentric* readers to the people behind the institutions and organizations in the arts community. Arts & Entertainment reporter Linda Chomyn

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