

MOZART FOR CHILDREN B 1

COMPLETE EVENTS CALENDAR B 2

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Mozart, A Man for All Ages

By Christine Burns

LENOX: Mozart and Vivaldi are no strangers to Lenox. Their music has entertained audiences at Tanglewood for over fifty years.

However, Debbie Surwitz, the artistic director of Mozart for Children, has found a brand new listening market for the masters' work. The Mozart for Children program offers a creative way for toddlers, ages 2 to 7, to explore classical music.

"We take a very unique approach to introducing children to this type of music. One that is not offered in regular music classes for children of that age group," said Surwitz.

The overall aim of the program is to provide children with a gratifying musical experience which will lay the foundation for a lifelong appreciation of the arts.

Mozart for Children has been in existence for four years in New York in two Manhattan locations. According to Simon Surwitz, managing director, the program has received such a favorable response from parents and children in New York, that they decided to "take the show on the road". He cited the Berkshires as an excellent location to conduct classes considering that the

area is home to many classical music lovers who might want to introduce it to their children.

The Berkshire classes are conducted at the Children's Center on School Street in Lenox.

"The whole idea of the program is to open the children's ears to classical music. But the most important aspect of the program is that the children have fun," Debbie Surwitz said.

She pays very close attention to the fun factor in her classes.

In the introductory class, the children learn how to sing a basic scale through the use of animal hand puppets.

"How do you think a kitty cat would sing the scale?" she asked the class.

"Meow, meow, meow, meow, meow, meow, meow, meow" was the response in not quite, but almost, perfect harmony.

The children are also introduced to the concepts involved with the performance of classical music. Through the use of percussion instruments, such as hand drums, maracas and tambourines that the children themselves are allowed to play. Surwitz teaches the children the simplified meanings behind the words forte, pianissimo and crescendo.

Surwitz, a graduate of the Mannes College of Music, is a skilled teacher and puppeteer and a professional singer. She is a founding member of the Studio of Performance in New York and the Institute for Creative Development in Antwerp, Belgium.

"I don't give rigid lectures to the children about the mechanics of the music," said Surwitz.

...this is Mozart. They wouldn't understand it that way. We use music the music mainly as a vehicle for playful movement."

...near around the room with their arms open as if they were graceful birds. But when the music changes to a staccato rhythm,

"Through repetition they learn to move faster or slower in accordance to the appropriate music. It's remarkable to see

Classes will be conducted in 45 minute sessions on Monday, Wednesday and Friday through August. Surwitz lends the music

program, still limiting age level. The th



Debbie Surwitz, director of Mozart for Children, introduces her young students to an innovative way to enjoy the masterpieces of Vivaldi and Mozart.



Mad. Mozart 2

Photo by Greg White