

Career Sense

Career Link's Blog

Training the Musicians of Tomorrow

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Conductor Arthur Arnold is committed to training the world's future musicians

Conductor Arthur Arnold believes there is a future in music for young people with passion and commitment.

“Music is so much a part of who we are, what we need in life. It’s a necessity when something big happens, like what we saw during 9/11. Once the streets of New York were clear and safe, people formed choirs and began to sing hymns and other music.”

Arnold is the conductor and creative spirit behind the Pacific Region International Summer Music Academy [PRISMA]. Between June 18 and 28, PRISMA will help up to 84 young musicians from all over the world prepare for a future in music.

Currently the chief conductor of the Moscow Symphony Orchestra, Arthur sees Powell River as the perfect location in which to nurture young talent. “We’re in kind of a nature retreat here, with none of the distractions of the big city. Powell River’s devotion to music is really high. It’s an enormous advantage.”

As proof, he points to Powell River youth who are currently building musical careers, such as Carli and Julie Kennedy. Julie, a violinist, was named Concertmaster of the 2007 National Youth Orchestra of Canada, while guitarist Carli took third prize at the Canadian Nationals. As a duo, they were nominated for five BC Country Music Awards in 2012.

Sixteen year old Joey Schweitzer and his older brother Eli can also look forward to promising careers in music. Joey recently entertained on piano at a PRISMA fundraiser, while Eli is now studying cello in university. Eli will participate in PRISMA in June. Violinist Maddy Hocking, a graduate of Powell River’s former Symphony Orchestra Academy of the Pacific [SOAP] is now studying at the BC Conservatory of Music and will play in the National Youth Orchestra this year.

These young people all share a common vision:

“There are many people in this world who have both the passion and the dream of becoming musicians. For many, the feeling that they want to play an instrument starts at a very early age. From there, it’s a steep

learning curve. Many go on to university or a conservatory, but that training is not enough. So students look to summer camps for more in-depth training, such as we provide in PRISMA. Here, we work according to the professional model: four or five rehearsals, followed by a concert. It's very intense, with students playing three or four hours a day." (In orchestra rehearsal, many more hours with lessons, sectional rehearsals and practice)

The value of PRISMA's master classes with world renowned musicians cannot be underestimated. As Arthur points out, music is more than just the notes written on the page.

"There is also the tradition: how to execute a piece. There's a huge database, or pool of knowledge, within people who have become masters of their instrument. Consider Rostopovich, a great cellist who died a few years ago. He worked with Shostakovich, one of the great Russian composers. That line, that musical knowledge, passed from Shostakovich to Rostopovich to the cellists now teaching."

Musical skill is not the only challenge on the road to becoming a professional musician. "Once you master your instrument you're still not guaranteed a job. That's why preparation for a successful audition is such an essential component of PRISMA."

Arthur recalls an incident that occurred a few years after Powell River hosted the first program of this kind, known as SOAP.

"I was conducting an orchestra in Transylvania, and I recognized the leader of the violas. There I was, deep in that country, far away from everything, and I recognized her! It turned out she had been in Powell River, and that experience had helped her land her job in the orchestra."

The kind of jobs available to musicians vary enormously. Many set their sights on orchestras:

"In an orchestra, there are 80 people or so. Given the number of orchestras, that's quite a few jobs," says Arthur. "It's a very international profession: in North America, people may travel from the east coast to the west coast to audition.

Others aspire to play chamber music, in a string quartet for example, or a piano trio. "For me, this is the highest art form in music. There are only so many in the world who get that kind of recognition," says Arthur.

Then there are the few at the very top who become soloists, playing the solo parts in concertos. "These are the Yo-Yo Ma's of this world. They travel the world to take part in competitions. We are very lucky to have someone of that calibre coming to PRISMA this year: violinist Soyoun Yoon. "

Not everyone, of course, becomes a famous musician. Arthur compares it to sports. "There are very famous players on the top teams. But let's not forget the kids who are just learning to skate and who need teachers."

Music offers many opportunities for those who want to teach. "They can be teachers in high school or in music schools; they can become private teachers who help amateurs become good players or just enjoy their instrument."

A passionate teacher himself, Arthur has some words of wisdom to offer parents. "Don't push. Give your children the space to enjoy music. I'm not pushing my own kids, not at all. I want them to discover who they

are in life and what suits them.”

What is his advice to young people considering a career in music? “Be aware of what music is for. It’s for giving to others, for sharing. You don’t know who in your audience desperately needs the music tonight. There might be someone whose life is dependent on it. That higher goal gives you the strength to return to your exercises, to keep going even when you’re tired or don’t feel like it. You have a mission.’ That would be my advice to students.”

Tickets for PRISMA’s stellar lineup of concerts, rehearsals, and master classes are now available online at orchestra-academy.ca, and at Breakwater Books, 6812 Alberni Street (604.489.0010), as well as at the Will-Call table at Evergreen Theatre on concert days.

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