

Youths find musician's talents mix

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Martial arts and music in a church setting?

It's definitely an unusual mix, but one that the children enjoy when they come to St. Bridget's Church, 175 St. Bridget's Drive, on Saturday mornings.

Approximately 12 young St. Bridget's parishioners, who range in age from 5 to 14, gather with Derrick Smith in a vacant room next to the church sanctuary. The 34-year-old Rochester man spends about an hour teaching the youths various forms of self-defense, and another hour providing musical and vocal instruction.

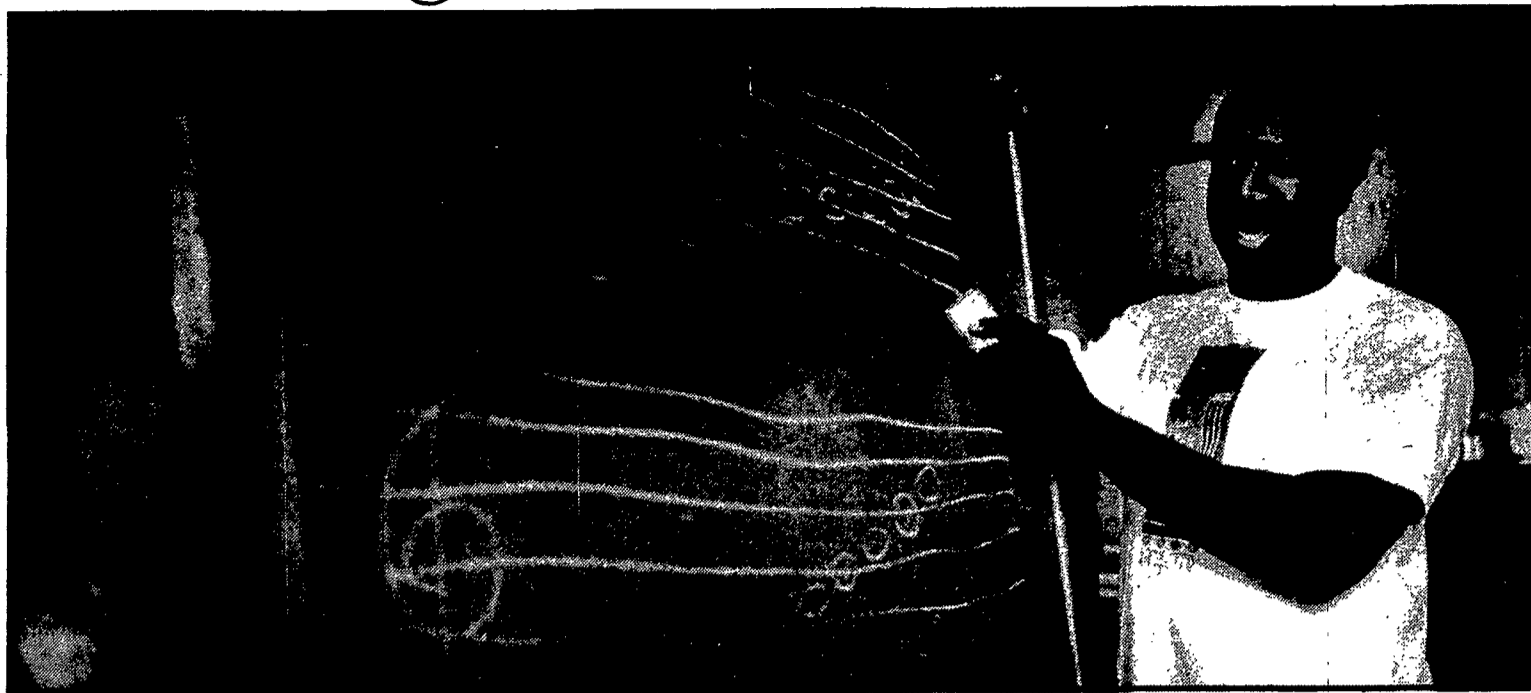
The program began in the spring of 1992 as part of a first-time community service project funded through the Eastman School of Music, 26 Gibbs St. Smith was appointed to a faculty position in the Eastman School's Community Education Division, with his responsibilities being centered entirely at St. Bridget's.

"This was to offset what's going on in cuts being made with the (Rochester) City School District's music program," explained Smith, who earned his master's degree in voice from the Eastman School in 1988. In addition to his duties at St. Bridget's, Smith teaches a music appreciation course at Rochester Institute of Technology.

Currently, Smith's group meets once a week on a year-round basis. "I'm looking to expand this program so that kids here with talent might have a chance to receive a scholarship to the Eastman School," continued Smith.

The tall, muscular Smith also owns 20 years of experience in martial arts. Soon after he began offering the program Smith decided to pass on his self-defense skills along to the youths.

"Mary Greely Miller (a St. Bridget's parishioner who helped launch the program) told me, 'You're going to have to do something to keep them interested for two hours.' Some girls are reluctant (to participate), but the boys love it because they're mostly watch-



Derrick Smith, a faculty member at the Eastman School of Music's Community Education Division, meets weekly for two hours with 12 young parishioners at St. Bridget's in Rochester to teach them musical and vocal instruction as well as self-defense.

ing movies like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*," said Smith.

"I teach them what to do if somebody comes at them with a knife, or throws a punch. The girls, especially, need this because women are more susceptible to being attacked or terrorized," Smith added. "I'd like them to grow up knowing that if they come across some guy who has a problem with women, they'll be able to fight back."

Jamia Danzy, 11, is a regular participant in the program along with her 12-year-old cousin, Shawn Danzy. Although Jamia has not found it necessary to test out her new self-defense skills on any classmates at school, "I showed them the moves, though. They all went 'wow,'" smiled Danzy, who lives in Rochester and attends St. Louis School in Pittsford.

Due to the inner-city environment in which many of the children live, Smith admitted, "Unfortunately, I think (self-defense training) is necessary."

"We're trying to do this outreach to keep the children interested in the church, because there are a lot of things outside of it that can distance them from church," remarked Miller.

Miller got the program off the ground by contacting Vincent Lenti, director of the Eastman's School's Community Education Division, last year.

"We're high on spirituality, and the Eastman School is high on resources,"



Miller commented.

Thus far, Smith reported, the program has been successful in his eyes.

"The response has been consistent. But the parental involvement is absolutely vital to keep this going," he acknowledged.

Miller, who coordinates several youth ministry programs for St. Bridget's Church, is hoping that grants from the Eastman School will eventu-



(Above) The year-round program for children, who range in age from 5 to 14, began last spring. (At left) Smith shares his 20 years of martial arts expertise with the group. He also teaches a music appreciation course at Rochester Institute of Technology.

Photos by
Kellie Mc Cann

ally enable the music/martial arts program to expand to children regardless of religious affiliation.

She noted that students from School No. 9, located directly next door to St. Bridget's at 485 Clinton Ave. N., would most likely thrive from Smith's sessions.

"Our ministry is for all children. We just happen to be Catholic," said Miller.

City of Rochester to sponsor pumpkin decorating contest

ROCHESTER — A pumpkin decorating contest for young children will take place on Sunday, Oct. 11, from 1 to 3 p.m. at Ontario Beach Park Warehouse No. 3 (located near the boat launch).

The contest is sponsored by the City of Rochester and is being held in conjunction with the River Romance Weekend festivities.

Children will compete in four categories: ages 5-and-under, 6-8, 9-11 and 12-14. Pumpkins and limited decorating materials will be supplied. Youngsters may bring their own decorating materials, but no knives or carving tools may be used.

For details, call 716/244-0555 between 3 and 6 p.m. or 865-2041 between 6 and 9 p.m.

Nonsense

the musical comedy hit

is back!

Opening October 14

with many original cast members

325-4370

OR



TICKET EXPRESS 100 EAST AVE
1-800-722-3939

DOWNSTAIRS CABARET THEATRE
Corner Andrews & St. Paul ● Rochester

Vant to look "Bootiful" this Halloween?!...

Come in for a "spell" and let our Boo Crew outfit you vit von of our costumes for rent or sale.

Check out our spooktacular Halloween costume and party accessories, masks, make-up, wigs, hats, trick or treat handouts, and many more ghoulish items.

Bring in this ad for
FREE FANGSI

Don't valt 'til the last minute. Hurry in TODAY!

KING SALES/COURT JESTER

"The complete Halloween Store"

Open 10 am-9 pm Mon.-Fri.

Sat. 10 am-5pm, Sun. 12-5 pm during Oct.

46 Sager Drive 442-8922

off Culver between East & University
(behind Empire Electric)

