

FEATURE

Encore! Select Orchestra will play on

By Liza R. Mugnolo
Editorial Intern

Four elementary Catholic schools combined their musical talents to form a "Select Orchestra" over the 1999-2000 school year. The good news for these students is that the orchestra will continue during the 2000-2001 school year.

"I'm very excited about next school year," said Julianna Clark, a sixth-grader at St. Pius X who was a member of the orchestra. Julianna has played the clarinet for about six months and has been perfecting musical pieces from "The Little Mermaid" during the summer session.

Under the direction of Frank C. Anselmo, music teacher for the four schools, the orchestra combined 51 band members from St. Lawrence, Mother of Sorrows, Holy Cross and St. Pius X. Their performances took place exclusively at the four schools and were called the "Jubilee Tour 2000."

"Everywhere we went the kids got a standing ovation," Anselmo said. "The kids did a great job, we're so proud of them."

The orchestra consists of brass, wind, percussion, keyboard and stringed instruments. Most students preferred brass instruments to string or percussion, yet Anselmo convinced some to play violin in order to make the ensemble sound more like an orchestra than a band.

Anselmo noted that 60 percent of the orchestra's third-through eighth-graders are rookies at playing any instruments. However, many of them can pick up music so quickly that they easily tackle more complicated pieces that are normally designated for the high school level.

The Select Orchestra's debut performance, which took place at St. Lawrence

last May, brought forth a wide range of musical selections, including "When the Saints Go Marchin' In," "Frere Jacques" and "Carnival of Venice." Several students had the opportunity to give solos.

"It was really fun because I got to play with a whole bunch of people who were really, really good," said soloist Adrienne Easterly, a seventh-grader at St. Lawrence. She has been playing the flute for about four years.

Students were thrilled with a visit last year from the renowned Christopher Seaman, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra music director, who did some conducting and teaching on how to sit properly and professionally.

"He has a special place in his heart for young children," remarked Roger Daily, director of education for the RPO.

"I feel that music should not be an optional extra and that every child should have it in their lives," Seaman told the *Catholic Courier*. He said that he highly enjoyed working with the young students under Anselmo's direction and would like to help out again this upcoming year.

Administrators agree that music and academic learning go hand in hand.



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer
Music teacher Frank Anselmo helps Patrick Montanaro adjust the mouthpiece on his saxophone on June 16 at St. Pius X.

"There's a strong connection between music and academic studies," added Joe Holleran, St. Lawrence School principal.

Holleran said he feels that every school, religious or secular, should have music instruction. It better prepares younger students to take on the rigors of high school, he said. The school principal noted Anselmo's dedication to instilling the importance of music in children's lives.

"They see him as a coach, and they know he's here for their benefit," said

Schools receive grant

Sister Margaret Mancuso, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction for the Diocesan Department of Catholic Schools, said she hopes the Select Orchestra will be as successful this second year and will inspire other students who are not currently involved with music.

She noted that while each school has its own music classes and a music teacher, it is more difficult to provide instrumental instruction.

"The difference is that we don't have the funding that a public school would need to purchase instruments," she said, adding that neither is a full-time instrumental music instructor in every school affordable.

Last year a grant provided \$4,740 for handchimes, and Sister Mancuso has reapplied for a renewal. The grant came through the New York State Non-Public School Facilitator's Office in partnership with Malmark Handbells Co. of Buffalo.

On June 3, music teachers took part in a workshop to learn to use the chimes to integrate math and science into classes this fall. The teachers were from Holy Cross, Charlotte, St. Louis, Pittsford, St. Michael's, Newark, St. Francis DeSales/St. Stephen's, Geneva, St. Lawrence, Greece, St. Margaret Mary, Irondequoit, and St. Pius X, Chili.

Holleran. "It's very evident that he loves kids and he loves music."

This upcoming year, Anselmo expects to increase promotion, support and overall quality of the already popular Select Orchestra.

He attributed the success of the Select Orchestra to the young musicians themselves.

"Just seeing the children's faces can't be beat. They work so hard and all of a sudden, the audience is clapping and standing up," Anselmo said. "It's their faces, that's what pays off right there."


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