

Oceanside Classical Concerts Society Holds First Masterclass Program and Announces New Musical Scholarship for Students

Beethoven would be proud, Mozart ecstatic and Bach joyous – Oceanside Classical Concerts Society has developed into an amazing community musical experience, and is about to transcend itself as it evolves into its next phases.

This year marks the sixth season for the OCCS and bringing world-class artists to the community; musicians who have mesmerized and entertained in amazing concerts that highlight historic Masters as a well as contemporary classical composers. “Our goal was to have outstanding musicians come to Oceanside,” explained David Douglas, president of the OCCS. “It was a dream to see and hear the best-of-the-best in our local area and to promote music for everyone. But, it was also our goal to develop a sustainable educational funding and mentor program for students and those people who want to hone their own musical skills.”

In late February, while announcing the highlights of the 2020-21 season, Douglas announced that OCCS has initiated a Masterclass program and Scholarship program. The first Masterclass was held February 20 and it involved students from Kwalikum Secondary School. Five brass musicians from the school teamed up with the Foothills Brass Quintet for a two-hour intense learning experience that involved structure, subtle techniques and applications about the instruments and working as a harmonious unit.

Each student paired up with one of the professionals and throughout the session, they received individual tutoring while having the opportunity to play alongside their mentor. “We really learned how to breathe and appreciate how, done properly, it breathes life into the organism of the band. It was amazing,” said student Ethan Dowdle.

Carsten Rubeling, from the Foothills Quintet used the example of a baseball player and said, “you need to breathe through the note; you can’t stop. It’s like a pitch, you wouldn’t stop part way through a throwing motion. Breathing is so essential to the flow and follow-through.”

The hands-on approach and instruction with the students, along with reinforced critique, became obvious as the Masterclass progressed and by the end of the session the students and Foothills Quintet were playing together as if they had done this many times before.

Gwaiidon Duckworth-White, the tuba player from Kwalikum explained, “it was so good to interface with another tuba player; there are so few of them. It was revealing to learn about alternate fingering, pacing and becoming part of the music.”

After rehearsing a couple of pieces, it was decided that the students would join the Foothills Quintet at the next night’s performance in front of a sold-out Oceanside Classical Concert. The culmination came when, after intermission on show night, the Kwalikum musicians joined the professionals and performed “*Jesu Joy of Man’s Desiring*”, by Johann Bach. The standing ovation from the audience proved this type of program is exactly what can and will help music students as they move forward in their musical careers.

Also announced at the third concert of the 2019-20 season was the launch of the OCCS Scholarship program for high-school students in the Oceanside and surrounding area. Joe Straka, OCCS Vice President, indicated the scholarship is the culmination of a vision to support, promote and further musical education for those who want to study music at post-secondary schools.

A detailed plan and roll-out of the Scholarship program will available through the OCC’s website and all schools in the area will be informed on how to get involved. “It’s important that we work with the schools, music teachers as well as those who teach privately to ensure no musician is missed,” said Straka. “The significance of this Scholarship is to fulfill the OCC’s vision and safeguard the future interest in music and what it means to an individual as well as a community.”

Written by Don Dempson