

Young Mozarts Embrace the Music

Brendan Aldridge of Velarde and Zaira Martin of Anthony didn't know what they had gotten themselves into when they submitted an original music composition to the Hey, Mozart! New Mexico child composer project. Their tunes and 14 others from children around the state were selected from some 200 submitted in 2009 to be arranged by adult musicians, performed in public and recorded for a professionally produced CD. As they watched the crowd at the National Hispanic Cultural Center's Journal Theatre in Albuquerque grow to 600, they were downright scared.

Despite inner fears, they and the other young composers, aged 12 and under, performed like professionals. Aldridge had composed a song about a black polar bear. Martin had written three haikus which she sang and whose tunes she played on the xylophone. They received the applause of the crowd, congratulations from friends and family, and a CD that contained each one playing his or her tune as well as the arranged version performed by Chatter, a chamber orchestra.

At a reception in their honor following the performance, the young composers had the opportunity to speak with the arrangers of their works and other professional musicians. It was a life-changing experience for some of them. John Paul Norman of Corrales, a 2007 composer had been playing the recorder for less than a year when his piece was chosen. The roar of the crowd got to him. He has gone on to have major roles in several musicals.

"Hey, Mozart! New Mexico is a wonderful project that offered me unique opportunities," says Amalia Zeitlin, a selected composer from Las Cruces. "I heard my piece per-



Brendan Aldridge of Velarde composed a song about a black polar bear. Photo by Toni Beatty.

formed three times. The first time was in Albuquerque with the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of David Felberg. Then, Lonnie Klein conducted it with the Las Cruces Symphony, and most recently, I played my piece with the El Paso Youth Symphony, conducted by Benjamin Vickers."

The professional musicians who arrange the tunes of the 16 composers for orchestra also come from all over the state for the concert and to meet "their composer." Composer, musician and teacher Eric Waters says, "I look forward to the Hey Mozart! New Mexico experience every year. It is a unique celebration of creativity in our state. I am always uplifted by the uninhibited ideas of the child composers, and it affords the arrangers and musicians a special communal experience in our professional lives." These professionals mentor and encourage the young composers.

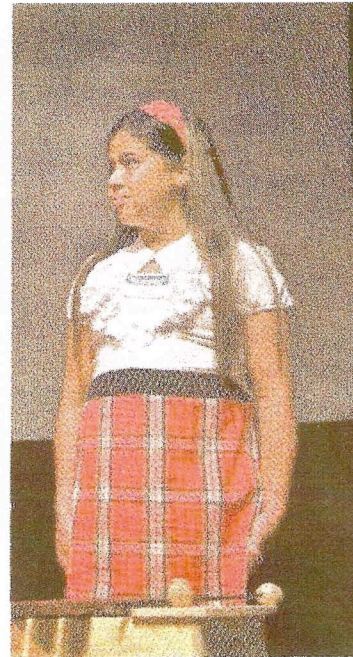
Hey, Mozart! New Mexico was started in 2005 by Javier Lorenzo and Tomás Lozano with assistance from the creator of the project, musician and composer Alejandro Ruty. In 2006, the project was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) and began expanding its reach from the state's major cities to the rural areas of the state.

The project currently is seeking melodies for its fifth competition with a deadline of March 31, 2011.

The project is open to New Mexico children born on or after March 31, 1998. Children may submit a melody in music notation or simply record themselves on a DVD or CD. If a child has trouble with recording, project volunteers will try to find someone in the area who can help. Prior submissions included cappella songs and melodies for many different instruments.


In addition to the Albuquerque performance for all the composers, some have performed for their schools, school boards and in various concerts around the state. The Las Cruces Symphony Orchestra and the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra have featured local young composers in their concerts for fourth-graders.

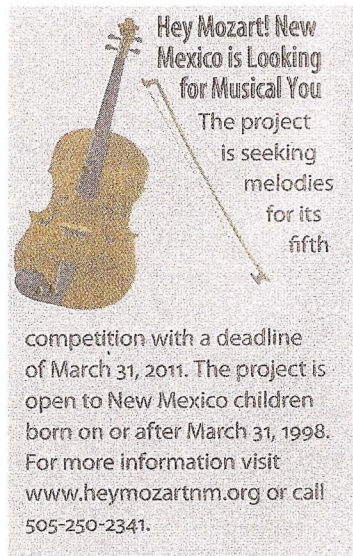
In 2009, Hey, Mozart! New Mexico's board realized that being selected as a composer offered such a unique experience that they changed the rules to permit a child to be selected only once. However, a "master class" category for those children who had been selected previously was created. That year Jocelyn Boyack and Amy Thomas of Albuquerque, Jamie Des Enfants of Las Cruces and Ian Kingsolver of Placitas were chosen for this honor. Their works were orchestrated by Albuquerque Youth Symphony staff for specific age orchestras and performed by these orchestras in the spring of 2010.



Zaira Martin of Anthony wrote three haikus which she sang and then played on the xylophone. Photo by Toni Beatty.

For information on how to submit a melody, visit the website www.hey Mozart! New Mexico.org or call 505-250-2341.

The next Hey, Mozart! New Mexico concert is next year on November 4 at the National Hispanic Cultural Center's Journal Theatre in Albuquerque. 



Hey Mozart! New Mexico is Looking for Musical You

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