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# GUITAR

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# MIDORI AND FRIENDS

## Inspiring Children Through Music

John D'Addario, Jr. Chairman Emeritus

By LAWRENCE DEL CASALE



*East Guitar Quartet.*

DURING the 1970s New York City was on the brink of bankruptcy. As a result the Mayor had to lay off 10,000 educators, many of them Music, Art, Dance and Drama teachers. The city witnessed the beginning of the end of its 'audience feeder system' for the Arts, particularly for jazz and classical music. Some thirty years later New York City has never fully recovered. Entire music departments were left to fall into disrepair. New York City, once the jewel of the country's Arts education programmes, is no more.

Since then there have been countless cultural arts agencies and even fewer residencies that try to fill that vast chasm. Usually a school district, of which there are about 30 in New York City, spread out over the five boroughs finds itself with some extra funds, and if the Principal of a school is savvy enough he or she might use them to bring various arts programmes into their school. This might be a musical performance, a dramatic or musical play or simply a musician who will perform and demonstrate how an instrument works followed by student Q&A. The best case scenario is to bring in a residency, and usually the only way to do this is with private support. I have worked for the New York City Board of Education for fourteen years, and I've seen many Arts Agencies - some good and some not so good. Nothing can replace a District wide Music pro-

gramme (such as the one I work for in Westchester County, NY) with vocal music beginning at kindergarten level continuing through grade 12 chorus, and instrumental music beginning in the third or fourth grade leading to senior year high school band, Jazz band or string Orchestra.

Going back to New York City, one particular programme caught my eye, Midori & Friends, a non-profit music education programme whose mission is to 'inspire children through music.'

Yes, that's Midori the violin virtuoso. Midori & Friends, founded in 1992, has made a serious commitment to bringing music into the NYC state schools one school at a time on a year-long basis. In some cases, longer, with residencies such as their Adventures in Making Music programme which provides skills-based instrumental and vocal instruction. Children sing or play guitar, yes guitar, which is one reason why I'm writing this article. Other residencies offered include violin, cello, flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone and percussion in small group lessons that meet twice weekly and culminate in recitals or other music-sharing events. Students learn to read and create music, play melodies, and explore their own creative, expressive style.



**Ben Verdery.**

For this periodical the focus will be on the year-long guitar residencies, which have been so generously supported by John and Joan D'Addario Jr. and other foundations including the Music for Youth Foundation, the NAMM Foundation, and C.F. Martin & Co. Students in the Midori & Friends Partner Schools (Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens) have opportunities to learn the guitar in their own classrooms alongside peers and classroom teachers while the curriculum introduces musical concepts such as melody, pitch, and rhythm. Students also learn to understand different styles of music by bridging popular and classical music to jazz and world music. At the end of the guitar residency there are end-of-year concerts featuring the guitar orchestra where students showcase what they have learned to family, friends, and the community.

Last year Midori and Friends hosted the Guitar Fest 2009! at the SONY Wonder Technology Lab on Madison Avenue in Manhattan. The day began at noon with 'Meet the Guitar', an interactive event featuring the students of P.S. 72, P.S. 85, P.S. 64, P.S. 98, and P.S./I.S. 180, along with their teaching artists and music specialists.

Following these sessions, children and family members had the opportunity to do some strumming and plucking of their own. 'Try a Guitar' sessions took place in the Atrium level throughout Sony's exhibition spaces.

The day highlighted music and technology through activities ranging from tours of the Sony Wonder Lab to an interactive presentation by the Air Band. Other chances to enjoy the guitar took place in two concerts: Cultural Cousins of the Guitar in the Hi-Def Theater and Guitar Stars in the Atrium. Hosted by Paula Bing, the Cultural Cousins concert introduced audience members to plucked and strummed instruments from China, the Middle East and West Africa. Artists included Huang Li Jian on pipa, Dafer Tawil on oud, Fode Sissoko on ngoni, and young talents, Kevin Sherwin on classical guitar and Yaning Wu on zheng.

Guitar Stars, the day's concluding event, introduced the audience to a range of musical styles which showcased the instrument's versatility. During this concert, guest artists Ben Verdery and 1 East Guitar Quartet gave wonderful performances. Additionally, along with Midori & Friends teaching artists Tom Halpenny and Sean Satin, guest artists performed with the guitar students of PS 72 and PS 64. Other contributing talents were Ulla Y Carlos, Melody of Dragon, and Adam Kolker and Nir Felder.

Five hundred students are actively taking guitar lessons in seven schools this season, and Midori & Friends hopes to expand these programmes to even more students in the years ahead. As a performer and educator who once worked in New York City's fine state schools, it is my hope that the ever expanding guitar component in the Midori & Friends venture continues to build young talent and the audiences needed for the future of music in our schools and our communities.

## Midori



Since her debut at the age of 11 with the New York Philharmonic over 25 years ago, the violinist Midori has established a record of achievement which sets her apart as a master musician, an innovator, and a champion of the developmental potential of children. Named a 'Messenger of Peace' by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2007, she has created a new model for young artists who seek to balance the joys and demands of a performing career at the highest level with a hands-on investment in the power of music to change lives.

In 1992 Midori founded Midori & Friends, a non-profit organization in New York, which brings music education programs to thousands of underprivileged children each year. Two other organizations, Music Sharing (based in Japan), and Partners in Performance (based in the US), also bring music into the lives of people who may not otherwise have involvement with the arts. Her commitment to community collaboration and outreach extends beyond these foundations to her work with young violinists in master classes all over the world, to her Orchestra Residencies Program, and to her positions as Jascha Heifetz Chair and Chair of the Strings Department at the University. Visit: [www.GoToMidori.com](http://www.GoToMidori.com)