

Letter to the Desert Sun Editor printed in January 2011

Submitted by:

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“Music is the universal language of mankind” Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Having retired to the Coachella Valley after many years of living in the bustling Los Angeles area, I was afraid we'd lose touch with the many cultural events that take place there. This week I realized we had not lost a thing – seeing Itzhak Perlman at the McCallum Theatre was an amazing event. Having a world class violinist, who, in my estimation, is one of the VERY best musicians in the world, present a recital 5 minutes from my home was like a dream come true. I have to say we have now arrived and nothing could top that except maybe YoYo Ma coming to the Coachella Valley.

Being a professional musician myself, I had to miss an important rehearsal with the Coachella Valley Symphony to attend the Perlman Concert. But, I felt this was a concert that I would never see again. Besides the wonderful music, there was something about the audience and their reverence for this musician and his stellar accompanist that made the evening even more special. I was talking with a young violinist sitting a few seats from us in the front row, and she was excited because her family had come at the last minute to see Mr. Perlman and when her mom went up to the ticket booth, they presented her with a FREE front row seat that had been donated back to the McCallum for some deserving musician to receive. Hana's parents sat in the top balcony while she was able to sit 10 feet from the artist as he played. What a wonderful opportunity the angel donor gave to this young, aspiring violinist. I was humbled by that person who donated the gift to Hana who plays in the Buddy Rogers Youth Symphony.

I also am affiliated with that group through my playing Principal Cello in the Coachella Valley Symphony. The symphony has a long heritage of doing the same thing as our angel donor did at the Perlman concert. The Buddy Rogers Youth Symphony (BRYS) and the Beginning Strings Conservatory which we support through our concert ticket sales, is one of a very few groups in this valley that caters to children and youth by providing classical music training in the orchestra and violin lessons at the elementary school level. This we do without charging any fee for participating in this worthy endeavor.

Having grown up in the era of school orchestras in elementary, junior high and high school, it is very sad that our schools today throughout the country have lost almost every music program in the name of budget cuts. While there are bands in middle and senior high school, there is very little in the way of string programs besides BRYS and the violin program.

After coming home from the Itzhak Perlman concert, I began to think about our orchestra's mission – to provide classical music to everyone in the Coachella Valley and help children receive this kind of training. With all the hate, dissension, political turmoil, and violence that we read about and experience on a daily basis, the Perlman concert was an island of civility that we experience all too infrequently in this time of war and economic downturn.

My hope is that the children we serve through these two music programs will be better citizens who appreciate fine music and have less stress in their lives. I'm also heartened by the person who donated that front row seat to a deserving young person. I know there are others out here who support our orchestra by attendance and donations. It is a gift to the children of this community when this support is given.