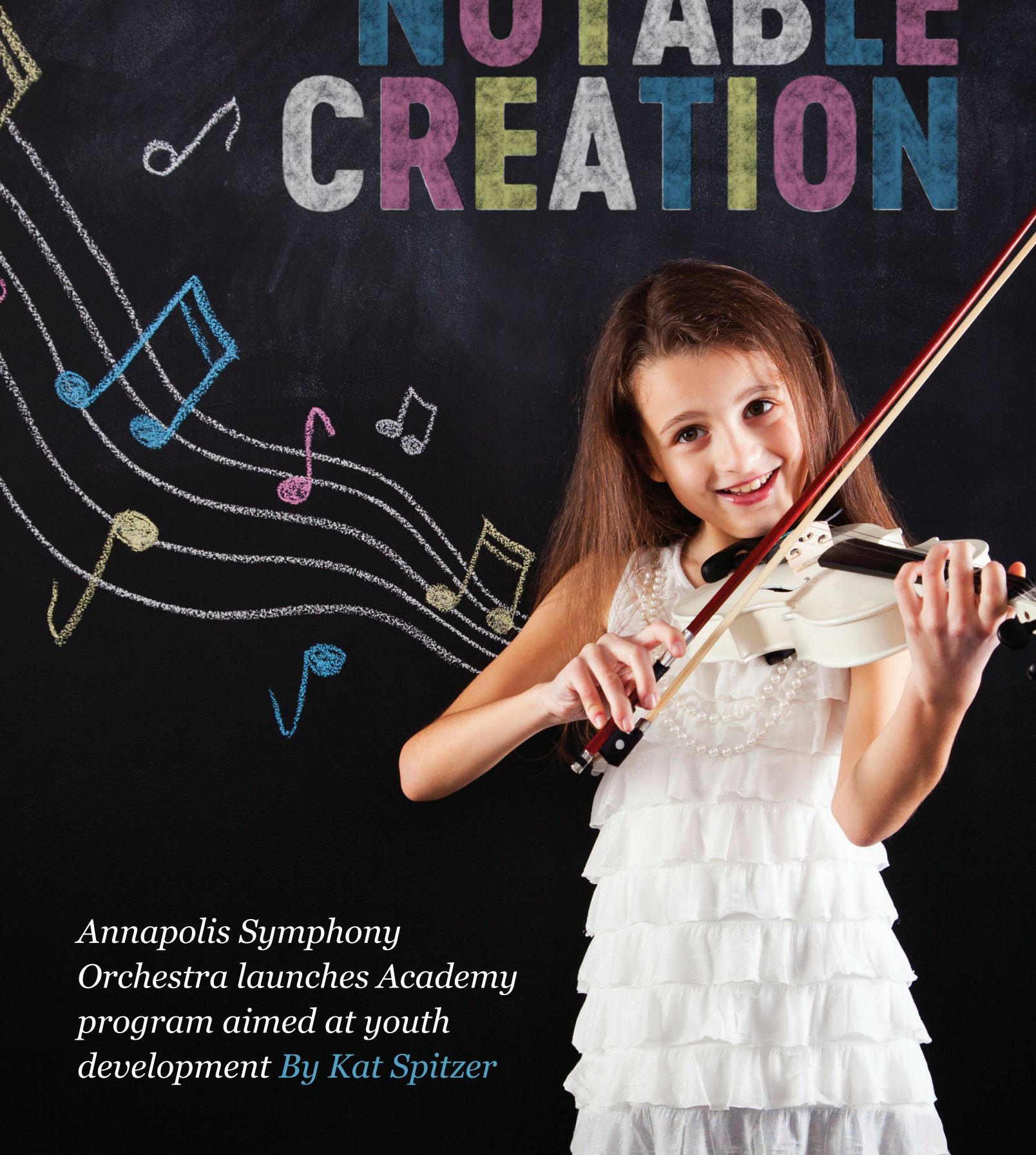
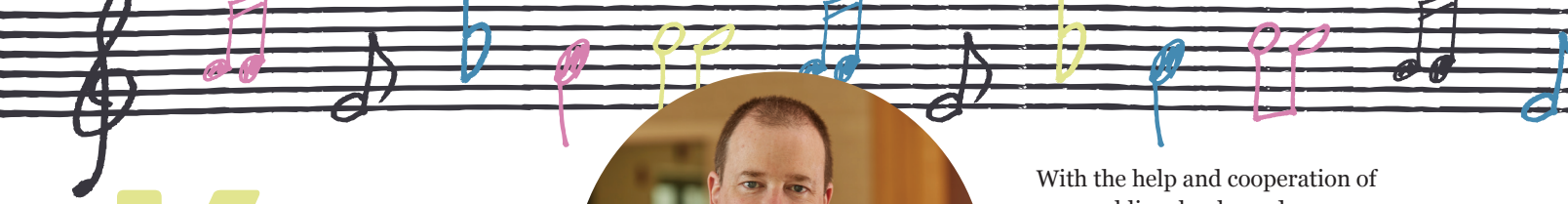


NOTABLE CREATION



*Annapolis Symphony
Orchestra launches Academy
program aimed at youth
development By Kat Spitzer*



Kids are faced with almost endless choices these days for activities and sports. But often, the activities are expensive, or it's hard to find programs that build demographic diversity and offer a high level of training. The Annapolis Symphony Academy provides an excellent chance for youth to take their musical talents to the next level.

The Annapolis Symphony Orchestra has established The Academy to create an opportunity for students from all different backgrounds to pursue their music passion. Students can join school orchestras at public schools around Anne Arundel County, but quality private lessons are often difficult to find and very pricey.

The result of all this has been some degree of exclusivity. "On a national level, only about four percent of professional musicians in orchestras are African or Latino," Executive Director of the Annapolis Symphony



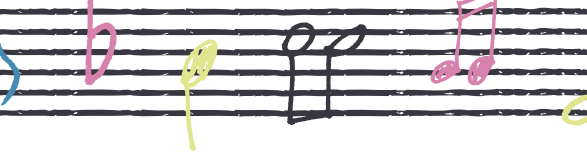
WITH THIS PROGRAM, WE ARE AIMING TO BUILD DIVERSITY IN A CULTURAL AND FINANCIAL SENSE.

—Patrick Nugent, Executive Director of the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra

Orchestra Patrick Nugent says. "With this program, we are aiming to build diversity in a cultural and financial sense. About half of the students in the program are on full need-based scholarships. By teaching the kids now, we are creating the orchestras we want to see in the future."

With the help and cooperation of area public schools, and a generous contribution from the Chambliss family, the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra was able to put its weight and reputation behind this program. "County students are great," Nugent says. "But these students are finding it hard to progress because private lessons are hard to find or they can't afford them."





Dr. Natanel Draiblate, the founder and director of the Academy, is also the Concertmaster of the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra. He had the idea to start the program and wanted to make it as inclusive as possible. “We hold auditions in the public schools and here at Maryland Hall,” Draiblate says. “We went into over 30 schools to talk about the program and within five minutes at some schools, kids had already gone online to sign up for an audition.”

Auditions for the inaugural fall program took place this past spring. This year, 70 kids signed up, 60 auditioned, and 44 made the cut. The program is expected to grow and expand, and the goal is to reach 200 students in six years.



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“I met two little girls who were passionate about being professional violinists, but they couldn’t afford private lessons,” says Alexandra “Sasha” Mikhlin, a violin instructor for the Academy. “One of them was adopted and lived with a single mom and was awarded a full scholarship. Both the mom and child were crying from excitement. It warms my heart to see students this excited about music, and we haven’t even done the teaching yet. It makes me feel so grateful.”

The program has two parts: the group playing experience, and a one-hour private lesson each week after school. “We are trying to bridge the gap between single and ensemble performing,” Nugent says. “This program is a building block to playing well as a bigger group.”

Laurie H. Berman, Chair of the board of trustees, adds “We are seeing wonderful students from all different learning backgrounds. They come from public schools, private schools, and many are home-schooled.”

Karen Brandli, mother of 11-year-old Sadie, says her daughter is very excited to join the program. “When most kids are playing video games or at sports practice,” she says, “Sadie is practicing her violin and piano. That’s her special place. She just wants to have a group of other kids that feel the way that she



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does about her music. She couldn’t wait to get a date for the audition. Kids tend to hang out with the kids that they do sports or team activities with. Well, if they don’t have that team sport, but love music and don’t have an orchestra, then they tend to not have ‘their group.’ We are hoping that it’s more than just practicing music and performance; we hope that it will bring them great friendship and belonging.”



Teachers for the Academy often come from the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra itself.

“We want kids to be in the know,” says Dr. Daniel Shomper, a cello instructor. “Musicians come from all over the military, conservatories, and more. They should know that training in music leads to many other opportunities.” In addition to receiving coaching from the principal musicians and full ensemble, the ASO conductor will work with the students, as well.

Berman adds: “This program teaches discipline, multidimensional thinking, structure, creativity, and brain development. This is the start of students understanding that there are ways to make money in a career in music, doing something they love. Can you tell we’re excited?”

The program is available for students ranging from sixth to 12th grade but can also accommodate younger accomplished musicians. For the auditions, students play scales and choose one or two pieces to play, depending on their age.

“We have been impressed that the students all come in with hard pieces of their choosing; never the easiest,” Draiblate says.

Nugent also notes that while there are some performances as part of the program, “It is not a youth orchestra, but rather musical instruction, where ensemble playing is more of a teaching experience.”

The students are also required to keep playing at their schools. While county schools have helped in putting this program together, they in turn will be helped with enthusiastic, well-trained musicians coming out of the program.

Tia Anderson’s daughter, Saniya, will be a participant. “Saniya began playing the violin in third grade, but was always interested in music,” she explains. “She never thought that it would take her this far or that she would have a serious passion for it. The Academy means a lot to Saniya, and she has a sense of accomplishment because she has never dreamed of opportunities like this.”

Another bonus of the Academy is that the participants can attend any Annapolis Symphony Orchestra program for free, which is an excellent opportunity to hear the music and see them playing at a professional level. The students can draw inspiration from the performances.

“The Academy nurtures individual talent and builds up those students who are filled with promise, drive, and interest,” Berman says.

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Saniya adds: “The audition process can be stressful or scary, but as long as you know that you have potential to become amazing, you’ll for sure do your best and put your all forward. Just have confidence and faith in yourself.”