

Bandages for the Arts Cuts

By Kathy Buckworth



For many young students with a flair for the creative, music and art classes represent the most enjoyable and satisfying parts of their school day. Who doesn't remember learning *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* on a cheap plastic recorder, or making their non-smoking mother a lopsided ashtray for Mother's Day? Sadly, many of the programs, which provide these young Mozarts and Henry Moores with an outlet for their abilities, have fallen victim to the recent wave of budget cuts. While there is a mandate from the government to provide music in the curriculum, the fact is that many instrumental music classes have been cut, in particular for Grades four to six. (Note: As announced at the end of April, the existing itinerant grade five and six music programs in the Toronto District School Board will remain intact with a one-year reprieve while the matter undergoes further discussion.)

Many parents are now turning to alternative programs for their children's arts and music. It can be challenging to find the right one, at the right cost, for the right level, but we've scoured the Toronto area to bring you some unique places to go.

"If music be the food of love, play on"

■ TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PROGRAMS:

Adopt a Player: In 2004/05, the TSO will have 15 schools, representing almost 500 students involved in this program. Roberta Smith, Associate Director of Artistic Administration, Education explains: "Schools are chosen through the Music Department of their respective Boards of Education. Schools are charged a fee of \$500 per school, however, this program is highly subsidized and schools pay less than a quarter of the actual cost of running the program." In this unique program, children in the Grade four to five range work shoulder-to-shoulder with a professional musician from the TSO, over a six to eight week period. Together, they will create and perform an original piece of music. Children attend a TSO

rehearsal and an evening or weekend concert. The impact to individual students is incredible. Dylan, grade four, had this to say: "My favourite music used to be rap, but when (the) TSO came to my class it changed to classical." For more information, click on the TSO website at www.tso.ca, or call Roberta Smith, Associate Director, 416-593-7769, ext. 371.

For the young person who has taken private music lessons, the **Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra (TSYO)**, founded in 1974 by Victor Feldbrill, offers children aged 22 and under (most fall into the 14-22 range) the opportunity to work closely with TSO members who lead regular coaching sessions. Recently, both Peter Oundjian and Sir Andrew Davis conducted TSYO concerts. Many of the 'graduates' of this 80-member orchestra go on to play professionally in some of the world's greatest orchestras, including the TSO. Andrew and Jim Creeggan of the Barenaked Ladies got their famous start here. The cost is \$550 per student, and auditions are held annually in September. Each year, every musician must re-audition. Again, check out the TSO website for more information, or call Carolyn Matt, Manager, at 416-593-7769, ext. 372.

For those whose best-played instrument is their voice, the **Canadian Children's Opera Chorus**, established by founder Ruby Mercer in 1968, offers a wide range of programs for children from senior kindergarten through to university-age. Approximately 240 children are enrolled in the program, from the Ruby Chorus (aged five to six), through to the Youth Chorus (aged 16+). The Principal Chorus, made up of children aged 10-16 who have 'graduated' from the Apprentice Choir, perform eight times per year. Along with the choir training, they also receive direction in drama, theory and eurhythmics. Auditions are held in August (although please call at any time during the year to find out about openings), and according to director Ann Cooper Gay, "any child who can understand pitch and follow directions" will have a great

chance of being accepted to the Ruby Chorus. For up-to-date fee information, check their website at www.canadianchildrensopera.com or contact Ann at 416-366-0467.

Kindermusik is a German-born music organization that now has hundreds of licensed practitioners in Canada alone. The program is targeted for newborns to seven-year-olds, and parents are involved intimately in the classes and musical development of their children through fun activities based around music. Classes are held in many different types of locations including private music studios, homes, community centres and churches, to name a few.

To find the location nearest you, go to the www.kindermusik.com website and use their program locator tool. One of their providers, **88 Keys** at www.88keys.ca, 905-881-2893, also has five scholarships to award potential students from low-income families. Another local Kindermusik provider to check out is Sesaya at www.sesaya.com 647-439-6346.

Perhaps Grandma or Grandpa can take the kids to lessons. The **Yamaha Music Education System** now hosts no-experience-necessary seniors courses at three of its six GTA Locations. Known for their keyboard approach, Yamaha puts three-year-olds onto

these portable instruments. They also teach older children guitar, violin and "Electone" which is a multi-keyboard, drum machine and special effects instrument. Call 416-224-5590. Or check out www.yamaha.ca.

■ YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE ART

It's great when kids can get messy and creative – especially at someone else's house. And that's just what it feels like when you enter the **Avenue Road Arts School**. This charming old converted home houses and fosters the creative talents of many young minds in this mid-Toronto neighbourhood. My daughter Vicky enjoyed the clay sculpture classes the most, with many of her friends opting for the three dimensional/mixed media art programs. You'll be amazed at what they can do. From drawing and painting to mixed media, you will find what you need in either after school or Saturday classes. Check their website at www.avenueroadartsschool.com, or call 416-961-1502. Arts for Children of Toronto is their charitable arm. Scholarships through them are available based on financial need and a strong interest in one of the arts. See www.artsforchildren.org or call 416-961-1502 extension 302.

The **Art Gallery of Ontario** (www.ago.net) could be just the ticket for your aspiring Picasso.

Starting with their smART program for kids aged six to seven, the AGO has a variety of programs which "provide young people with creative opportunities and in-depth access to historical and contemporary art." All classes are naturally age-appropriate, and special youth programs (for ages 14-19) including the Architecture course, which teaches students to re-design the AGO with their own plans as Frank Gehry does it for real. Call their public programs line at 416-979-6608.

The **City of Toronto** also offers many fine arts programs designed to meet your budget. With a plethora of classes, workshops, and gallery exhibits to choose from, you're bound to find something for any age and interest level. Check out your Recreation Programs and Services Guide (delivered to most Toronto homes), and go online at www.toronto.ca/culture/artcentres.htm. The Arts & Heritage programs through the City include crafts, dance, theatre games and many art classes. Some of these start at a low \$25.00 for nine weeks of lessons. You can't afford to miss these. Again, check your Recreation Programs Guide.

"Art for humanity's sake" is the message of the **Phoenix Arts Group** (contact Kathie Young at kathie@phoenixartsgroup.org, or 416-304-0647). Pre-school children learn through stories and verses, with drawing, painting, line exercises and beeswax modeling forming their program. Older children will be able to participate in geometric drawings, knitting, sewing, clay modeling, drawing and painting. "Students get acquainted with works of art and learn from them a concept of beauty and how this concept changes through the ages," says its literature.

Art Works Art School, located in the heart of Bloor West Village at 2451 Bloor Street West, has something for the very young (aged four to five, Kinder Kids), to the teen group. Unique programs which focus on drawing animals, creative cartooning, photography, creating games and puzzles, sports illustrations and portraits and masks are only a small sample of the lineup. Visit their website

at www.artworksartsschool.com or call 416-766-0662 for fee and program information.

■ READY FOR YOUR CLOSE UP?

The **National Film Board of Canada (NFB) Mediatheque** program is an amazing low-cost option for your little Spike Jones. Their animation workshops run on the weekends, and for only \$5.00 per child, the NFB conducts "hands-on interactive workshops in animation where children can create their own little story using paper and clay and take a copy of the film home with them if they wish," according to Joe Lamanna. "The NFB is proud to provide content that is age appropriate, non-violent, non-sexist and non-racist and which reflects Toronto's wide diversity." Visit their website at www.nfb.ca/mediatheque or call 416-973-3012 for more information.

For those who prefer to be in front of the camera, send your Mary Kates and Ashley to the **Children's Television Studios** 1498 Yonge St., near St. Clair. It's not inexpensive, but a six-week training program includes coaching on expression, memorization, diction, clarity and projection. If nothing else, their public speaking skills will be well-honed. Be warned however, that there is an initial audition to pass, so prepare the drama queens before you go in. Call 416-922-2564 for more information.

■ GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR HERITAGE

Combining an arts program with programs specific to your culture can be a fantastic way for your children to learn and grow. The **Koffler Centre of the Arts** offers children (and adults) the opportunity to participate in ballet, folk dancing, Israeli traditional dancing, plus international dances from the Baltic countries, Scotland, Russia, Japan, Israel, Romania, Poland and many others. Contact the Bathhurst Jewish Community Centre at 416-636-1880 for more information.

Or, follow the advice of Margaret, who lived and worked in Japan for many years before returning



to Canada to teach kindergarten. She still teaches Japanese on Saturdays, and has found that the **Japanese Cultural Canadian Centre** (www.jccc.on.ca, 416-441-2345) is an excellent source of children's arts programs, including origami, the koto (Japanese floor harp) and many other unique offerings. Check your own consulate in the Toronto area for sponsored programs.

■ START SOMETHING WONDERFUL

While your school may have been forced to cancel ongoing music and art programs, with help from your own **School Council** and a lot of parent and community involvement, it is possible to re-introduce valuable arts opportunities to your children. An Etobicoke school recently developed an Enrichment Committee that was "parent sponsored to help provide enrichment through in-school presentations by third-parties and through school excursions," explains Martin, a proud Dad to 13-year-old Victoria, who participated in the program. "These activities would be coordinated through an enrichment parent who worked with the teacher to ensure the activity could be curriculum-related where possible." The School Council also produced an annual literary publication called "In Their Own Write" which was a compilation of children's literature. The intent of the publication was to

promote excellence in writing, and also included creative art and drawings from children in the school for illustration purposes. Amazing what bright minds and motivation can achieve.

The **Ontario Arts Council** can provide a list of artists available to visit your school for a minimum of a week at a cost of only \$350 to introduce anything from traditional African Folk Dance to film-making or puppetry. Visit www.arts.on.ca and search under "publications," Artists in Education Roster or dial OAC's general number (416-961-1660 or 1-800-387-0058) and ask the receptionist to send you a list.

To find out how to host a partially-funded school visit by a professional writer, open to all schools in Ontario, visit www.writersunion.ca and search for the Writers-in-the-School Program on the Hosting an Author page or call Allison Hrabluik at 416-703-8982, extension 223. Be aware that these visits need to be applied for well in advance of the actual date.

For more than 25 years **Arts Etobicoke** has partnered with schools and community agencies developing programs to involve young people in the arts. The Arts Etobicoke Presidents' Legacy Scholarship Fund, Arts Discovery, Exploring an Artwork in Depth workshops and the Benefit Performance for Arts Education all aim to ensure a future for the arts in the community and schools.

For more information about their programs and initiatives, contact Arts Etobicoke, at 416-622-8731 or visit www.artsetobicoke.com

Arts for Children has half (\$50) or full day (\$75) outreach workshops for schools deemed in low income areas of Toronto. See www.artsforchildren.org. or call 416-961-1502 extension 302. Talk to your School Council president or School Principal to see what you can do for your own children.

Above all else, make sure your kids have access to all the books they can read (libraries are wonderful places to visit anytime), music they can hear, and art projects they can work on. Arrange to swap books and CD's with friends. Save all your recyclables for creative arts projects and let their imaginations soar.

Kathy Buckworth has four children and comes from an artistic and musical family whose genetic luck ended (just over) 40 years ago. Her children enjoy dance, music, and art classes and may overcome their unfortunate parentage through sheer perseverance. Kathy appreciates talent and is happy to lend her support through volunteer work with the TSO. Her book about the real life of a Super Mom will be published in Spring 2005.

Montcrest School



Inspired Education for over 40 years.

OPEN HOUSE

JK to Grade 8
Wednesday, November 3
4:30 – 7:30 p.m.



4 Montcrest Blvd., Toronto, Ontario M4K 1J7
(416) 469-2008 Fax: (416) 469-0934
email: sue_maxwell@montcrest.on.ca
www.montcrest.on.ca

Art Works Art School
art for the soul
CLASSES FOR ALL AGES
In 2004 Wins Village Show 19%

Full Program Available:
Mon-Fri 9:00am-12:00pm (including
4 Periods Developmental Tools)
• Drawing • Painting • Ceramics
• Pottery • Sculpture • 3D
• Special Art Exhibitions • Programs
After school, weekend, birthday parties and Family Day!

2457 EGLINTON AVE. (at Bayview) TORONTO, ONT. M6H 2G7
TEL: (416) 298-0997 • F: (416) 298-1941
www.artworksart.com

EXPERIENCE ART...
MESSY HANDS.
another fine mess

Hillcrest Mall
9350 Yonge Street,
Suite 200A
Tel: 905-787-9900
or 416-525-MESS
www.messyhands.com

ON THE ORIGINAL PARTY BUS!
ART BUS & STUDIO • PARTIES • ART • CLASSES • SCHOOLS
• CAMPS • SPECIAL EVENTS

Northwood Academy
Montessori Plus! – An Enriched, Bilingual Preschool

Montessori Academics plus 9 months. Spanish, creative arts, drama, music, art, playtime, science, computers, cooking, fitness activities, 9/10 golf, trips, visitors and more!

ages 1-10 • 4 years • flexible scheduling • extended hours

6 locations
• North York
• Markham
• Thornhill
416-492-7812

NEW!

Montessori for Toddlers
Ages 18 months - 2 years
An enriched Montessori program in a loving home-like environment.
PARENT & TOT CLASSES ALSO AVAILABLE!