

North Shore Kids Team Up with the VSO

music

by Valerie Wood

To the delight of many music lovers, the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra has arrived on the North Shore under the baton of the always-entertaining Clyde Mitchell. This year the symphony is featured in a three-concert series sponsored by the North Vancouver School Board.

The first concert of the North Shore Classics series, held at the Centennial Theatre on October 22, 1997, was well-attended. The second concert, scheduled for March 30, 1998, will feature Ryan Karchut, a gifted 17-year-old North Vancouver violinist, who will join the Vancouver Symphony to perform Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto*. The symphony will also perform Mozart's overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune* by Debussy, and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*.

The final concert, to be held May 27, 1998, at Carson Graham Secondary school, will showcase student musical groups. Last year's hugely successful concert featured the North Vancouver Honour Band and the North Shore Youth Symphony, and was emceed by CBC's Kevin Evans.

At a time when many school districts' arts programs are on the chopping block, North Vancouver's band and strings program — the main beneficiary of the North Shore Classics series — is not just surviving, it's thriving.

Thanks to a strong and resourceful parent association (formed in 1992 to fight the threatened elimination of the elementary band and strings program), school board support, and a group of enthusiastic teachers, the band and strings program is finding new ways to enrich students' musical education and reach out into the community.

How? By forming partnerships with professional arts organizations such as the Vancouver Symphony and by



The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra

taking students' education outside the classroom. For example, every July the peaceful stillness of Paradise Valley, site of North Vancouver's Outdoor School, is broken by young instrumentalists making music in the sunshine.

In addition, nearly every zone in the school district has an honour band, which provides students with the extra-curricular opportunity to make friends from other schools and play music which might be more challenging than what they normally encounter in their regular band classes.

The partnership between the symphony and the school district has brought many benefits. First, the students will have the opportunity to hear a world-class orchestra close to home, and at a reasonable price (tickets are \$20, or \$35 for the series). Learning to be a musician involves more than learning what keys to press: it requires learning how to listen. A young instrumentalist needs to hear an accomplished musician play before he or she knows what is possible. Hearing the orchestra inspires students and makes them excited about learning. Second, the students will have a chance to interact with, and learn from, symphony musicians. Recently, Corey Cerovsek, a 24-

year-old violin virtuoso and former North Shore resident, spent some time with young North Vancouver strings players. He held a master class, answering questions and advising students on works they are learning. He taught the students a great deal, and they came away from the experience excited about what could be possible for them. It gave them the chance to dream. None of that would have been possible had this partnership not existed.

The 1998-99 North Shore Classics series is already in the works, and will be featured in the Vancouver Symphony's subscription booklet next year. Watch for this, but in the meantime, come and enjoy the March 30 concert. ☺

Tickets on sale at Centennial Theatre box office. Please phone 984-4484 for more information.

Valerie Wood is a teacher in and a product of the North Vancouver Elementary Band and Strings Program. When not teaching music, she can be found sipping lattes at Starbucks.