

Local Arts

We're High Strung!

And we know how to have a good time!

by Andy Radin

High Strung is a community string orchestra based in Ulster Heights. Starting two years ago as a trio, it has now grown into a 13-piece chamber orchestra. As a group, we have now learned and performed three complete programs in a total of eight concerts. We begin working on a program in September for holiday season performances, and in February for June performances. We meet nearly every week in Ulster Heights for a sometimes-challenging, but always-enjoyable, rehearsal.

High Strung performs without a conductor, which is unusual for an ensemble of this size. Under the tutelage of Anastasia Solberg, our fearless leader, we have learned how to listen carefully to ourselves as individual players and as a group. Our playing and overall musicianship have improved enormously, thanks to this master teacher in our midst. Many of us have gone through the rite of passage of performing in front of audiences. The first time for me was heart-wrenching. But now, I look forward to presenting the results of a lot of hard work, no matter what the outcome. Performances have taken place at the Oracle Bookstore in Liberty, Monticello High School, the *Phillipsport Methodist Church*, *Ezra Israel Synagogue* in Ellenville, and several other informal venues. All of us benefit from associating with our diverse membership, ranging in age from 12 to 85. While a few of us play at an advanced level, most of us are beginners and intermediates. I don't mind telling anyone that I, a 40-year-old, play second fiddle to a very talented 13-year-old.

Anastasia Solberg, an accomplished violist who has made much of her career in Europe, is founder and director of the newly incorporated *Music Institute of Sullivan and Ulster (MISU)*. A reviewer (Johnny Rhinehart) recently wrote of her work: "Ms. Solberg chooses to reveal the deeply human intention behind many modern works that might be otherwise rendered as cold and austere."

MISU is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation dedicated to bringing classical music study and performance to communities of Sullivan and Western Ulster Counties. *MISU* is particularly interested in serving children of low-income families, adults returning to music study after many years, and pre-conservatory preparation for aspiring young musicians. We have a beautiful work and performance studio in Ulster Heights, and we hope to complete it during the summer of 2004.

Participation in the arts at the local level is a key to developing community. We are seeking the support of individuals and corporations, both for local student scholarships and infra-structural development. Please contact *MISU* at solange@catskill.net, or call 647-5087. The *High Strung Ensemble* is interested in attracting new orchestra members (string players only). A sliding scale fee is charged for participation in the orchestra, though we would prefer that all participants are fully sponsored. Students are also sought for regular instrumental instruction.

Look for our next performances this June. Please come out and support us!



The High Strung Chamber Orchestra, left to right: Lynn (nose, hands, and violin); Anastasia; Crystal; Maria's right arm; Hannah; Andy; Rob; Cecily; Siobhan; Bruce; Tassa. Photo by Richard Ross.

Celia Barry in All State Choir

Celia Barry was selected as a member of the All State Choir through audition last April in Nyack, NY. She performed a solo from Vivaldi's "Gloria" for a judge and earned a grade of 100. This was the second year in a row she earned a 100. It is especially interesting to note that she made it as a Junior. There were 138 students statewide with grades of 100 that were not accepted. This judge heard something very special from Celia.

(photo, left)

She attended rehearsals and performed in the Eastman Theater in Rochester, NY on December 3rd.

During the preparation for the performance, Celia had an opportunity to audition for one of the nine solo parts in one of the pieces being performed, and was selected. This, in effect,

makes her one of the best nine students in the state.

Celia, a member of the *Performing Arts Academy*, *Chamber Singers*, *Festival Choir* and *Jazz Ensemble*, represented *Ellenville HS* with class, dignity, and pride. 🌟

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