

Ravinia's High

By Mira Temkin

Photos: Ravinia Festival



Three violinists perform at the Douglas Park Field House in Lawndale

For Highland Parkers, Ravinia Festival has always been their summer playground for outstanding music, great performances, and a night under the stars. Couple all that with friendly gatherings as well as dining al fresco, and summer continuously makes Ravinia the star of the show.

What many residents don't know about, however, is Ravinia's efforts throughout the year to bring music and music education to underprivileged students in Lake and Cook counties, as well as to provide music instruction to Highland Park students. Reach * Teach * Play is a multifaceted program designed to educate, foster audience involvement, and ensure that underserved populations have access to live music experiences both in their own communities and at Ravinia. Through Reach * Teach * Play, there are currently more than a dozen education programs, serving more than 75,000 young people.

Keeping tempo with student education programming

In 1965, the Ravinia Women's Board planted the seeds of Reach * Teach * Play with the Opportunity Lawn Pass program, which gave students free access to concerts. This program led to other initiatives that served as the nucleus of the current signature Reach * Teach * Play program, said program director Christine Taylor.

"Ravinia's work in schools began in earnest in 1995 with the Ravinia Jazz Mentors Program, founded in part by jazz legend and Ravinia Jazz Artistic Director Ramsey Lewis," Taylor explained. "That program matched talented high-school students with Chicago's finest jazz musicians, providing intensive pre-professional training and mentorships," she continued.

Taylor said that other initiatives came through individual Ravinia Board or staff members. For example, Welz Kauffman, president and CEO of Ravinia, proposed One Score, One Chicago, a music appreciation program that introduces thousands of children and adults to a selected piece of classical music each year. This year's selection is Verdi's Aida.

"Bringing music to kids and to those who otherwise would not have access is one of the things that really gets my juices flowing," said Kauffman. "When I was growing up, it was only because I wanted to play the piano that my parents found me a teacher, and that's what set me off on a trajectory. It's really



Circle Rocket's orchestra students take a pre-concert break