



AMANDA THOMPSON
Nearly 100 third-graders
performed during W.T.
Moore's Sing Out
America production.

'BORN TO BE WITH MUSIC'

THIRD-GRADERS SING OUT WITH SPIRIT, COMPASSION

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The familiar lyrics "my country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing" are a reminder that one of the most rousing ways to demonstrate our American spirit is through song. Since our nation's founding, music has served to promote unity and pride, and W.T. Moore Elementary is carrying that tradition forward.

The entire third grade, nearly 100 students, lifted their voices to celebrate our country in a production titled "Sing Out America." Spanning a wide range of musical styles and genres, the program included patriotic standards, folk music and marches.

Students spent several months learning the material and polishing the sound as part of the music curriculum. Some students found that it stretched

them creatively, and the amount of work involved surprised Adyson Glass. "I learned that it's kind of hard to get to where we are now," she said.

Amor London-Johnson reflected on what she enjoyed most about the performance. "The melody is my favorite. It's the tune and when you sing songs it sounds really good." The production also featured several different kinds of percussion and Orff instruments. John Morgan got to play the triangle. "It makes a high-pitched metal-on-metal sound," he explained. "I like playing the instruments and I like hearing the different sounds they make."

Taj Ali admitted that though he is sometimes shy, "I have a guitar and I write my own songs." He believes that music brings out the best in us all and has experienced that himself. "I was born to be with music," Taj said. He feels strongly that it will continue to be



part of his life forever.

That is exactly what Tina Mason wants to hear. She has taught music at W.T. Moore for 28 years, and her main goal is "to help children become life-long lovers of music who are purposeful about including music in their lives as they continue to grow and learn. While they're falling in love with music, while they're learning that they can create music, they know they have a voice with them that they can always use."

Mason is also the chairwoman for the school's Kids Voting committee, and the message of that initiative mirrors her teaching philosophy, making her work doubly meaningful. An election year adds extra significance. "The

purpose of Kids Voting is to let the children know that they have a voice and we want them to use their voice. But we don't always win," she cautioned students. "We talked about how even if you're not happy with the results of something, you can still be respectful."

"We have a schoolwide expectation that Mustangs are respectful, responsible and ready to learn," Mason said. "When a situation comes up that children may be having a hard time cooperating or listening, the first thing we're going to say is 'Are we remembering to be respectful?'"

Mason recognizes that sometimes adults forget this basic tenet. She encourages her students to set an example and she counsels them "maybe you can show us how to do it better by speaking your mind and sharing your thoughts but also listening to other people's thoughts and putting the

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AMANDA THOMPSON

Tina Mason leading a percussion group during the "Sing Out America" performance

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voices together."

Listening is a critical component of being a musician, and in Mason's class, students explore and practice the act of listening in different ways. W.T. Moore has a specialized program for students with hearing impairments, and music is part of their regular rotation of classes. Though Mason admitted "it is challenging because music is auditory," she has a background in music therapy. "I sign a little bit and I am very grateful and blessed to have awesome and amazing interpreters who help me all along the way."

The "Sing Out America" production included one of the school's interpreters and a rendition of "America the Beautiful," which was sung and signed by the entire third grade. By celebrating diversity and inclusivity, W.T. Moore nurtures compassion in its students.

No matter how young or old, no matter your background, your beliefs, or your abilities, we all share the same desire to be heard. Music is uniquely suited for that impulse. It's shared across humanity as a universal language and it creates harmony from dissonance.

"Music provides balance and beauty in a child's life," Mason said. "It gives them a chance to create, to have fun and to be successful as they try how to figure out how to cope with life. It can keep them going when it's hard, which in itself is a skill. What am I going to do when life is hard, am I going to sit on the couch and say 'I quit'? I think music provides the opportunity to say I can do something, I can be inspired and encouraged to keep going when it's hard."

Amanda Karioth Thompson is the Education and Exhibitions director for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).