



MUSIC BLOSSOMS IN UNLIKELY PLACES

YOUNG PERFORMERS GET A CHANCE TO SHINE DURING TALLAHASSEE MUSIC WEEK

AMANDA KARIOTH THOMPSON
COUNCIL ON CULTURE & ARTS

You're not often serenaded by a jazz ensemble while you're working out the finances for a new car but that's exactly what happens during Tallahassee Music Week.

For the past three years, in the first week of April, audiences all across the community have enjoyed free, live music in both traditional and unexpected performance spaces, like Kia of Tallahassee. "Making the decision to turn our showroom floor into a music venue was something we jumped at the chance of doing," said Susan Schrier, a Kia of Tallahassee team member.

Tallahassee Music Week is a celebration of local music and it features artists of all genres and at all stages in their career. From the internationally renowned professional to the middle school student just learning fundamentals, the festival showcases the wealth and diversity of the talent in the capital city. A small group of dedicated volunteers coordinates more than 130 performances, and all of the artists are paid a stipend. This year, more than two dozen of the bookings highlighted emerging musicians.

Kia of Tallahassee hosted three of these concerts featuring jazz bands from Rickards High School, and Fairview and Rae middle schools. Schrier said, "Several of us at the dealership either have musical backgrounds or just have a genuine love for the arts. Having been a musician in my younger years, the experiences I had during that time helped mold and shape me to who I am today. Had I not had access to music education, I know my life would have been much different." It is with this understanding and spirit of support that so many local businesses open their doors to young performers.

The SAIL High School Musiq Ensemble, led by music teacher Chris "Seep" Seepersaud, put on a show at Tallahassee Nurseries. Amid the marigolds and geraniums were patrons who became accidental audience members as well as those who came out specifically to see the band. The group performed songs from chart-toppers like CeeLo Green, Amy Winehouse and Dave Matthews. Twelfth-grader Brittany Knight is a vocalist in the group and she explained why she enjoyed participating in Tallahassee Music Week.



Tallahassee Nurseries was one of the nontraditional venues and it suited the SAIL High School Musiq Ensemble perfectly.

"We love music, and we're here to celebrate our love of music."

BRITTANY KNIGHT
TWELFTH GRADER, SAIL HIGH SCHOOL MUSIQ ENSEMBLE

"We love music," she said, "and we're here to celebrate our love of music." Brittany also pointed out that these student performances give the public a glimpse at just how much our young musicians have to offer. "I feel like kids don't get enough credit for how talented we can be or our skill set. People don't know what we've learned, they don't know that we're professional." Brittany's bandmate Mikayla Elbertson agreed and she credits her music teacher. "Seep is a great mentor and I think it's awesome to be able to show everyone in our city how well he's been teaching us."

In addition to school music groups, many individual students performed during Tallahassee Music Week. Max VanHoeij is a violinist in the eighth grade at Cobb Middle School and this year he played at the Urban Food Market at The Centre of Tallahassee. Max began his training at the age of 4 and in the years since he has become

See Music, Page 3C

Music

Continued from Page 1C

an accomplished musician. He is the youngest violinist with the Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestra Philharmonic and he's played with Itzhak Perlman.

Though he's used to grand concert halls, Max has performed at many non-traditional venues with Tallahassee Music Week since the festival's inception. "I believe that music is meant to be shared with other people," he said, "and I like to show other kids that they can learn an instrument."

His mother, Susan VanHoeij, is a Tallahassee Music Week committee member and she has seen the benefits the event affords. "It brings in so many different worlds, all the live acts from kids like Max to these professionals that play all over the world. Being able to play in Tallahassee and the fact that everyone is from Tallahassee, it's a wonderful opportunity for him and for others."

Hub Chason had similar sentiments, and said, "I love the whole event. It's so cool to see so many musicians in so many different places." An 11th-grade

guitarist at Leon High School, Hub plays in multiple groups including the Leon Frets and The Good Little Chickens. Participating in Tallahassee Music Week has allowed him to exercise versatility and flexibility. "You play differently depending on where you are, how a room sounds, the equipment that's there, the crowd. That can all vary between every single show you do. It's important to get out and experience different kinds of things like playing underneath the flagpole at the Tallahassee Democrat or in a local restaurant that I've never been to. It's good to experience different ways to perform and how to handle different situations."

Bandmate and Leon 11th-grader



The Rickards High School Jazz Combo performed at Kia of Tallahassee.



PHOTOS BY AMANDA THOMPSON

Raa Middle School band director Barbie Townsend said, "Tallahassee Music Week allows our students to be performers in their community and gives them a chance to grow as musicians."

Gilbert Voegtlin sees another benefit for emerging musicians. "Some places we've played are extremely hard to book and you have to know people but with Tallahassee Music Week, all you have to do is sign up. It's really helpful for people who are just starting out because it gives us a baseline of sorts."

Josiah Pye and Austin Boyd are both 12th-graders at Leon and they've decided to continue studying music after high school. For Josiah, music offers an alternative means of communication that he appreciates. "It's really hard for me to articulate myself and speak to another person one on one. I've gotten much better at it but, when I play, I don't have to say anything. It's not important what I say, it's not important who I am, it's all about the music."

Relatively new to the local music scene, Austin has only been playing the drums for the past few years. "I really didn't realize the span of people that are musicians and where you can play. With Tallahassee Music Week, I've realized it's very fluid and there's all these different types of music going on in the city. This week make it clear to me how much variety there is."

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

