

For Immediate Release

A T.R.I.O. of Music Students Reach Out

Conservatory Students Teach Underserved Segment via the Internet

Attending a school that is completely surrounded by West Texas cotton fields is not the most likely place you would expect to find a future Juilliard student, but that is exactly where French horn performance major, Kathryn Peterson, a rancher's daughter, began her music career—Klondike ISD just south of Lamesa, Texas.

During the same time in the Los Angeles suburb of Brea, California, another talented young girl—the daughter of a Korean brush-painting artist—thrived with the challenge of piano lessons that her parents struggled to afford. This was the humble beginning of another artist, Alice (Gi-Young) Hwang, who had dreams of becoming a concert pianist.

Through years of hard work and dedication, these two gifted young women with very different backgrounds found themselves as classmates at the Idyllwild Arts Academy (“IAA”) in Idyllwild, California, one of only three boarding high schools for the arts in the United States. Each student spent her time devoted to improving their musical skills during their high school years. Both were very aware that the musical education they were receiving at IAA was something neither would have had access to in their hometowns—one simply because of geographic reasons as her roots were in the farming community of a rural West Texas town, and the other because of the high cost of a top quality musical education and the scarceness of funds available for extracurricular activities from an artist's income. As their senior year came to a close and college acceptance letters were received, both women were thrilled that they would be continuing their music education together at The Juilliard School in New York City.

Within the first few weeks at Juilliard, Peterson had a lesson with her teacher, Dr. David Wakefield, via the Internet as he was out of town during their regular lesson time. That lesson sparked an idea that Peterson discussed with her friend Hwang. “With that lesson, I realized that because of technology, any kid in any rural setting could have access to top musical

expertise in the form of an Internet lesson. With the invention of the Internet, kids in rural communities could have the same opportunities as their peers who live in larger cities. New York City and small towns like Lamesa, Texas, are really just a click away,” said Peterson.

Hwang really liked the idea, and although she could not identify with the disadvantages of budding musicians in rural settings, she did know a thing or two about how the cost of music lessons in urban areas creates a barrier for many talented students from pursuing music. Both women also remembered students in their music classes during their path to Juilliard who had a natural talent for music but whose families just did not have the money for private lessons.

“It is an undisputed fact that many young students in rural areas may be deprived of the high quality music education that is crucial to their development as young artists. Just as deprived, however, are those students who are no longer able to study with a private teacher as music lessons are one of the first ‘luxuries’ to go in bad economic times,” said Hwang.

The technologically savvy classmates decided to create a non-profit musical outreach program designed to benefit these underserved segments of aspiring music students. Together they formed the aptly named program known as The T.R.I.O. Project, which stands for *Teaching and Responding through Internet Outreach*. Music students who are accepted into the program are matched with a musical mentor/teacher that is a current conservatory student majoring in performance on the same instrument as the T.R.I.O student. “Support is a crucial ingredient to the growth of any musician, and with the many challenges an aspiring musician is bound to face, we feel like having a mentor is invaluable,” said Hwang. “Modern technology has enabled us to easily provide such mentorship over long distances.”

Both women are quick to point out that they are not targeting music students who already study privately, or those who have the financial means to do so. “We are looking for students who would not otherwise have access to private instruction on their particular instrument,” explained Peterson. “We can tell you first hand that nothing can take the place of the face-to-face interaction of a student and a teacher, and if that option is available, the student should definitely try to study with someone in their hometown. As in my case, there wasn’t anybody in my town who played the French horn.

It is those types of situations where The T.R.I.O. Project comes in. We have access to mentors for any type of instrument, including voice and piano, which can share knowledge that is specific to that instrument. ”

“We are also here to help students from the city as well as rural communities whose families are economically stretched and can not afford lessons right now,” added Hwang.

The T.R.I.O Project will begin its second year of operation this fall and is currently in their student recruitment and fundraising phase this summer. Peterson, Hwang, and another friend and classmate Clare Semes, will be traveling around Texas in mid-June performing as The Trio of T.R.I.O. to help spread the word about their outreach program. “We hope that those who hear us will tell their friends about T.R.I.O. and the word will eventually get passed to interested students,” said Peterson.

The T.R.I.O. Project offers web-based mentoring sessions to accepted students. There are a limited number of scholarships, but they also offer one-hour lessons for \$25 each. Once the mentor and student are matched, sessions are typically held weekly at a time agreeable to both. Additionally, The T.R.I.O. Project also offers short-term sessions, such as one or two months, which may better fit the time or budget constraints of the student.

The T.R.I.O. Project is a non-profit organization fiscally sponsored by Fractured Atlas. All donations are tax-deductible for the donor. For more information on how to apply to the program or to contribute, visit their website at www.trioproject.org or email contact.trioproject@gmail.com.

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