

IMPACT REPORT

SPRINGTIME AT MERIT: Prizes and Performances

Merit's Honors Brass Trio Win National Competition

Merit's Yumpadump Honors Brass Trio won the coveted 2015 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition Junior Division Wind Prize! Yumpadump Trio members, Adriel (Rush) Garcia, Ricardo (Ricky) Zapata, and David Sweeney, are coached by Merit teaching artist Timothy Riordan. The competition took place at the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center at University of Notre Dame in South Bend, IN in early May.

The Fischhoff Competition is the largest chamber music competition in the world. Each



The Yumpadump Brass Trio:

Rush Garcia, Ricky Zapata, David Sweeney

Watch them perform a work by Walter S. Hartley here: <https://youtu.be/H6TBMijFs4c>

year, an average of 125 ensembles, representing 22 nationalities, enter in either the wind or string categories. Fischhoff is the only national chamber music competition with both a senior division (ages 18–35) and a junior division (age 18 and younger). Founded in 1973, the Fischhoff Competition attracts the most talented young musicians from around the world. Previous Fischhoff winners include such luminaries as Pacifica String Quartet, Joshua Bell, eighth blackbird, and Axiom Brass.



Congratulations Class of 2015!

On April 26, another graduating class of Merit's Alice S. Pfaelzer Tuition-free Conservatory crossed the stage of Anne & Howard Gottlieb Hall. We're so proud of you!

You can help our future graduates reach for the stars with a gift today!

DONATE NOW

Donate now at www.meritmusic.org



StringTacular was Spectacular!

Parents were moved to tears as Merit students performed Suzuki repertoire infused with Latin folk music at this year's annual StringTacular concert. Sponsored by Rotary One Club of Chicago (www.rotaryone.org), StringTacular is a community-based concert that brings together over 275 string players, ages 4 to 18. These young musicians are enrolled in one of Merit's Suzuki-Alegre Strings music education programs held at Whittier Elementary School, El Valor Guadalupe Reyes Center, or at one of Merit's onsite programs such as Merit's Instrumental Music Program or the Alice S. Pfaelzer Tuition-free Conservatory. More than 700 community leaders, parents, and representatives from churches, schools, and local businesses made up the audience.



Held at Benito Juarez Community Academy in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, the free concert began with six of Merit's most accomplished string students. Gradually, additional students joined the group to perform new pieces until all 275 students played together. Directed by Monica Lugo, the Susan and Ted Oppenheimer Suzuki-Alegre Strings Chair, students played works such as *Fantomen* and the Spanish children's song, *Arroz con Leche*. Featured were Merit seniors Itzel Alvarez and Martha Muller. Itzel has participated in the Suzuki-Alegre Strings Program for fourteen years, and the Alice S. Pfaelzer Tuition-free Conservatory since 2009. Martha, the student leader of Suzuki-Alegre Strings, has studied at Merit for thirteen years.



On June 19, Merit's Honors Percussion Trio appeared on internet talkshow, *Playful Talk*.

To see the performance and interview with host Yana Reznik, please check out the video recording of the original broadcast here: <http://tinyurl.com/ovb7tcf>

STUDENTS WOW DONORS AT MERIT'S 2015 GALA

Merit School of Music celebrated 36 years of providing music education to Chicago-area children by honoring pianist and philanthropist Judy Istock and corporate leader Aon Corporation at its Gala on May 6, 2015 at Chicago's Palmer House Hilton. Co-chaired by philanthropist Ellen Gignilliat and retired Chairman & CEO of Northern Trust Corporation William A. Osborn, the event attracted a crowd of more than 500 supporters and raised more than \$1.1 million.

Welcomed with a *Prelude* from the Merit Trombone Choir, guests were treated to a program that showcased the quality and depth of a Merit education. Merit showed the short film *Lives Transformed: The Power of the Merit Experience*, which tells a compelling story about the dedication of Merit's talented teaching artists and their students who have grown as musicians and individuals through rigorous music education.



Above: The Conservatory Choir performs a tribute song to Judy Istock sung to the tune of *One* from *A Chorus Line*.

Guests experienced stunning performances by many of Merit's Alice S. Pfaelzer Tuition-free Conservatory students. The Honors Brass Trio played *Two Pastiches for Brass Trio* (W. Hartley). The Jazz Trio demonstrated their chops with *Easy Walker* (B. Taylor). Merit's top pianists Joshua Mhoon and Jeremy Nohel, performed works by Debussy, delivering outstanding performances. Shannon Keegan's pure and clear delivery of Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade* sparked a standing ovation. The Honors Jazz Combo wowed listeners with *Heavens to Monk* (S. Million).

Following a poignant tribute video focused on Ms. Istock's philanthropic efforts with Merit School of Music and lifelong dedication to the piano, Ms. Gignilliat and Mr. Osborn presented Ms. Istock with the Alice S. Pfaelzer Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts. Top members of Merit's Conservatory Choir serenaded Ms. Istock with an original tribute song sung to the tune of *One* from *A Chorus Line*.

The Annual Gala not only raises significant funds in support of Merit's model music education programming, it offers an opportunity to celebrate our school's success and highlights the positive impact that Merit and music education have on our community. Our student artists this year gracefully demonstrated the power of the Merit experience.

Watch the 2015 Gala Video *Lives Transformed* here: vimeo.com/127298830

MeritFest Showcases Bridges Students

This year, MeritFest took place on May 8 and 12 on the stage of Chicago's Orchestra Hall. First organized by Duffie Adelson in 1990 to offer budding musicians a unique performance opportunity, the concert has grown to feature over 1,200 *Bridges: Partners in Music* students. The young musicians were thrilled to meet and perform with peers from across the city. Students also had the opportunity to hear the six-member chamber ensemble Lakeshore Rush.

Merit faculty member, Dr. Elena Doubovitskaya, is the pianist for this ensemble.

In honor of Ms. Adelson's pending retirement, this year's MeritFest was dedicated to her and her work at Merit. Duffie received flowers while students read congratulatory notes from Merit supporters and alums celebrating Ms. Adelson's thirty-three years of Merit leadership and service. During the presentation, a city official announced that June 30, 2015 had been declared "Duffie A. Adelson Day" in the City of Chicago.



Above: Duffie Adelson receives a bouquet of flowers at MeritFest in honor of her retirement.

Left: Kristin Hedlund directs the Merit Instrumental Music Stradivarius Orchestra and Chopin Elementary Orchestra.