

Youth Spotlight

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY'S ONLY PERFORMING ARTS
NEWSPAPER FOR YOUTH

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MERIT EXPERIENCE

Leland Hsu

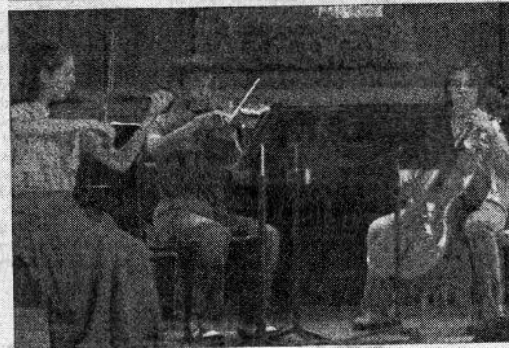
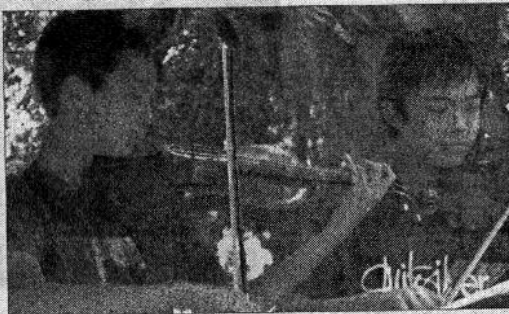
Music plays throughout a place where it is alive each day. Sounds of many instruments strike the halls of the practice and performance rooms. Laughter is set as the setting is happy and joyful. Musicians have fun with the quality of their play. Mentors cheer as their pupils listen and take action. The smell of a flavorful taste fill the air as able bodies line for the delight. Clapping of hands as a group of players have finished performing their piece. The final minutes as the waving of goodbyes and hugs as the end of the day happens. This is the Merit Program at the Music Academy of the West.

The Merit program is a summer program held at the Music Academy of the West near the Santa Barbara Zoo. Merit stands for "Music Education Reinforces Intellect and Talent". The Intellectual program is held every year in the early summer time for two weeks. Pupils of the program meet at 9:00 a.m. ending at 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon. Auditioning is required to enter this program. This program is for musicians who wish to improve their skills on their instrument. Not only to learn new concepts and skills at this program, but to make friends and have fun. Friendly mentors are chosen to teach the students to improve their ways on their instrument. Lunch is provided at 12:00 p.m. for students and ends at 1:00 p.m. In the afternoon master classes are held for the young musicians to audit older students' performances. One on one Mentor lessons are also available for students who want to work on their assigned piece or solo piece. The Merit Program plans a great schedule for many interested students.

My name is Leland Hsu. I am a violinist and have played for 7 1/2 years. I was a participant of the Merit Program last summer. I am currently an 8th grader in Junior High, and I also play the Alto-Saxophone. I am presently a member of the Santa Barbara Youth Symphony, and the Merit Extended Year Round program.

The experience at the Summer Merit program was full of color and liveliness. Playing with others, learning from my mentor, watching master classes, and making new friends were all part of everyday activities. Each day was planned to be an adventure filled with challenges and fun.

Working with others was a great experience for me. It taught me that teamwork was the main key to make good music. I was assigned to a Mozart Clarinet Quintet group. There were five of us- first violin, second violin, viola, cello, and clarinet. In my group, we always supported and helped each other out when there was a conflict. We'd talk about our own mistakes, and fix them accordingly. We would be so excited, if we all played well. Interacting with others helped me to realize that I am part of the group.



When I was assigned to my mentor, I was eager yet shy to meet him. Over the weeks, I learned a lot from him. I learned some new techniques, bowings, and fingering. He helped me to fix with a lot of problems, and I made progress. What I think of my mentor is that he's a really helpful and excellent teacher to me. He makes me feel more confident to this day.

Watching others play was a sight to see. Each day, I would go to master classes to watch other pupils attending the Music Academy play. I would listen closely to the music, and hear how they play. I had learned some skills or techniques that the performers used to play better. Listening and learning really had made me improve my musical and intellectual influence to classical music.

In the end, I gained valuable experience, and intellect. Playing with the others participants was fun and worth it. Listening carefully to my mentor made me a better violin player by the end of the two weeks. Watching others play inspired me to keep on playing classical music. The Merit Program has made a successful indent in my musical career.

Applications for summer MERIT Program are available on February 1. To request an application, call 695-7911. For more information, call Linda Holland at 687-6875. The MERIT Program will take place July 7-20.