

YOUNG VIRTUOSOS AT PERLMAN MUSIC PROGRAM

By David Lion Rattiner

If you ever make your way to Shelter Island you might notice a 12-year-old playing the most amazing violin music you have ever heard while standing outdoors, overlooking the bay. You might also see a group of students and their teacher sitting in a circle with instruments in hand, practicing a Beethoven symphony. It is striking at first to see just how young and how talented the students are who participate in The Perlman Music Program, violin virtuoso Itzhak Perlman's summer camp. You will be dumbfounded watching them play, as if they are magically expressing their souls through music.

The Perlman Music Program, housed on 28 acres in the Crescent Beach area of Shelter Island, is one of the most beautiful spots in the

world to play and hear music. Students in the camp come from many ethnic backgrounds and social strata, and descend onto this summer campus to hone their craft under the guidance of master musicians.

The driving force behind this camp is Toby Perlman, an accomplished violinist herself and the wife of Itzhak Perlman. Toby's dream was to create a new generation of musical leaders who could train in a supportive environment. She combined her incredible fundraising talent to create a musical paradise, where students and faculty can enjoy a ratio of better than two to one. The faculty, led by Itzhak Perlman, come from all over to train protégées. The summer camp is a six-week-long residency that serves 37 gifted students between the ages of 11 and 18. The students participate in

an intensive study that includes performances on Shelter Island, which are open to the public and almost always packed, as well as performance opportunities at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Neue Galerie in New York. In the past, students have travelled abroad, performing in China and Israel.

The camp carries on because of generous donations from benefactors. You could feel that support from the people who recently attended the concert inside a large performance hall set up underneath a white tent on the camp's grounds. Nearly 600 people listened in jaw-dropping amazement. One highlight of the performance was a singing bird who, like magic, flew into the tent and began to chirp away while Ron Leonard played cello and the incredible Inyoung Hugh played piano. Toby, always with poise, went onstage to explain to the audience how much Beethoven appreciated the sounds of nature with his music. The audience laughed as members of the music program attempted to shoo the bird out of the performance hall. The bird eventually flew away on its own, having had its solo.

Toby Perlman was especially grateful to those who make the camp possible. "It is all thanks to our benefactors," she said. "Running this camp could not happen without them, and it is why we are so lucky to have a group of people that supports this program."

The costs for running the program are on par with top conservatories. The program costs \$35,000 per student, but tuition is just \$5,500, and most students are on full or partial scholarship. The difference is covered by donations. It's easy to see why once you experience the magic the program creates on Shelter Island.

Entry to the program is highly competitive. Prospective students are required to send in a video of themselves playing their instrument, which is analyzed by the entire faculty at the campus to determine if they would be a good fit to the program.