



Music at Kohl Mansion

Press Release

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Burlingame Resident Anneke Gaenslen Honored by City Council

Burlingame, CA, May 23, 2014 - Thousands of Peninsula school children have been fascinated by hearing instruments from violins to tubas in their classrooms because of Burlingame resident Anneke Gaenslen. Burlingame Vice Mayor Terry Nagel presented her with a City proclamation on May 16 at a special Music at Kohl Mansion (MAKM) concert. The proclamation cited her 22 years of work as a volunteer creating and maintaining a highly praised **Kohl for Kids** program for Music at Kohl Mansion. The program brings professional musicians to perform for and coach 5,000 students each year in Burlingame, Millbrae and San Mateo.

Anneke's time and commitment have been the driving forces behind the success of MAKM's outreach to the local schools. With her help, the small budget chamber music series with a staff of a total of one and a half employees has developed a program that began with four in-school performances in 1992 and expanded to 85 outreach events in 2013. The series takes advantage of the rich pool of talent available from the rosters of the San Francisco Symphony, Opera, Ballet and other Bay Area groups.

A supporter of Music at Kohl Mansion from its beginning in 1984, Anneke saw in the early 1990s that students might not ever experience the thrill of being close to the melody of a violin or the pulse of a harp. She saw a way to share her love of classical music and to assist the chamber music series to reach out to the schools.

"The concept was strictly to enrich the school curriculum because there were a lot of cutbacks in the arts," she said. "We had a well-established venue and wanted to fill a need in the community, help young artists establish themselves and, for ourselves, create a base for future audiences of chamber music."

Anneke studied piano as a child growing up in Holland, and Gene and Anneke Gaenslen's Burlingame home was full of music. When their son Eric began Suzuki lessons with Carol Prater in the Burlingame schools, Anneke sat in on the sessions. She was also the young cellist's first accompanist. His talent took him to Yale University for a Bachelor's degree and then to Juilliard for a Master of Arts degree on his way to becoming a member of the Rossetti String Quartet and the Seattle Symphony.

With the support of the MAKM board, she set about connecting schools, students and musicians. Over the years, the task meant thousands of phone calls, faxes and personal visits to school teachers and administrators to coordinate the visits

With her keen ear, Anneke was always key in choosing the groups sent to perform in the schools. Anneke and MAKM tapped the Alexander String Quartet as an outreach partner in 1993. Every year, the ASQ has given masterclasses for junior and senior high school students in Millbrae and San Mateo. The Del Sol Quartet visited Peninsula elementary schools with sessions in which students mixed visual art and music, created compositions, and conducted the quartet. Quartet San Francisco took up the role in 2009.

Anneke has led a music education committee and assigned members to attend all in school performances to keep tabs on the sessions. What are the students actually learning about music? Is the presentation right for the age group? Are the kids involved?

A coaching component was added several years ago and is one of the most successful aspects of the schools outreach. Music teachers have clamored for as many sessions as possible with coaches bassist Michel Taddei, violinist Julie Kim, cellist Robert Howard, clarinetist Karla Avila and others. Music teacher Art McGaw at Taylor Middle School in Millbrae wrote, "The visiting professionals were fabulous." Music teacher Doug Miner at Mills High School wrote: "Michael Taddei was great as usual." Also from Mr. Miner to a visiting MAKM ensemble: "Your unique approach, including the improvisatory aspect, and instrumentation really engaged the students and opened their eyes to the possibilities chamber ensemble playing can offer."

"The program is great and growing, attracting more good people," Anneke said, always modest about her role. But the award still surprised her. "I was pretty overwhelmed."

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