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New Project to Send Musicians Into Schools

By [DANIEL J. WAKIN](#)

Two pillars of the classical musical establishment, [Carnegie Hall](#) and the [Juilliard School](#), have joined forces to give birth to a music academy whose fellows will go forth and propagate musicianship in New York public schools.

The city's Education Department is opening its arms to the new program, seeing an inexpensive but valuable source of teaching for a system deprived of comprehensive music training. And the leaders of Carnegie and Juilliard see an opportunity to promote their conviction that a musician in 21st-century America should be more than just a person who plays the notes.

Under the new program elite musicians will receive high-level musical training, performance opportunities at Carnegie Hall and guidance from city school teachers in how to teach music. The fellows will each be assigned to a different school and work there one and a half days a week. They will teach their instruments, or music in general, and give their own pointers to school music teachers.

The idea is to cultivate musicians with a wider view of the world, who will populate professional orchestras and help turn them into cultural forces in their cities. Such thinking has become increasingly prevalent in musical institutions, which worry that classical music has been pushed to the margins of society.

"It's essentially about how you nurture and train the finest young musicians," said Clive Gillinson, Carnegie's executive and artistic director. The idea, said Joseph W. Polisi, Juilliard's president, is to "change the paradigm" of being a musician and help players make music "that is at the center of society and the life of the individual." [Joel I. Klein](#), the city's schools chancellor, who has a fourth-grade clarinet education, said, "Here you are really talking about first-class musicians who will be working with our teachers and kids."

The school system is contributing almost \$200,000 to the first phase of the operation, which lasts from January through June. "The Department of Education is effectively buying services," Mr. Polisi said.

The total yearly budget is expected to reach \$5 million eventually, the organizers said. Carnegie and Juilliard have been raising funds from private donors for most of the costs and have received \$2 million in pledges so far. When asked whether he would seek funds from Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#)'s philanthropy, Mr. Gillinson said, "We'll be approaching everybody."

The program is starting modestly, with 16 fellows. But by the third year the organizers hope to have about 50, each receiving a \$24,000 stipend, health benefits, practice space, access to Juilliard's library and performance opportunities at Carnegie Hall and Juilliard, either in chamber groups or in solo recitals. The fellowship will last two years. The musicians will use space at Juilliard, and the administration will be housed at Carnegie. The manager of Carnegie's professional training workshops, Amy Rhodes, will serve as director.

The musicians are expected to spend 20 hours a week on fellowship activities, which include receiving free lessons and coaching and participating in master classes. Education department officials will provide training. In return a brass-playing fellow, for example, may work with a school band leader who is expert only in woodwinds.

The organizers hope the program will be seen as a template. Formally it is called the Academy: a Program of Carnegie Hall, the Juilliard School and the Weill Music Institute (Weill being the educational arm of Carnegie). Informally the program is called the Fellowship.

The effort is the first big project initiated by Mr. Gillinson at Carnegie Hall. He took over the hall — which has grown into a mini-empire of concert curators, educational workshops and music teaching — in July 2005, having played in and managed the [London Symphony Orchestra](#), where he also established educational programs.

Mr. Gillinson said that when he arrived in the United States, he was struck by the huge number of conservatory graduates and the tiny number of orchestra jobs, by what he called an “undersupply” of advanced music teaching in the city’s schools and by the lack of a resident ensemble at Carnegie. And he took note of Juilliard nine streets north.

“It seemed absolutely natural to me to do something in partnership,” he said. He invited Mr. Polisi to lunch in October 2005 to discuss the idea. “We realized we were in the same place,” Mr. Polisi said. They worked out a plan and last spring approached Mr. Klein, who has embraced such partnerships between the city and outside institutions.

Mr. Klein said that music classes had been severely depleted after the city’s fiscal crisis in the 1970s. Under his direction the Education Department has set up a comprehensive plan for teaching music, visual arts, dance and theater. Now some 978 full-time music teachers work in a school system of 1.1 million students. An incomplete survey found that 82 percent of New York City public schools have music teachers.

At its full strength the Academy will directly serve 14,000 students a year, said Sharon Dunn, the school system’s senior manager for arts education.

Bringing in outside help was a more efficient use of money than simply hiring more teachers, she said. Ms. Dunn added that even if the system had enough money to hire a music teacher for every school, there would not be enough teachers available.

Juilliard students already work with the city schools, but on a limited basis. Past efforts to broaden involvement “never really panned out,” Mr. Polisi said.

The first academy fellows were handpicked from Juilliard alumni and Carnegie’s professional training workshops. Future fellows will be picked through auditions, interviews and answers to essay questions.

The current batch includes the components of a woodwind quintet and a string quartet, a trumpeter, a trombonist, a double bassist, two pianists and two percussionists: a mix-and-match lineup for chamber and contemporary performances.

The biographies of the fellows show common threads. Most have master’s degrees and significant performance experience, particularly in chamber music. Several have founded groups or local concert series. Over all they

tend to be veterans of the summer festival circuit and list associations with prominent musicians like [Yo-Yo Ma](#) and [James Levine](#). Many have a bent for new music. Some already have experience teaching in music schools.

“It kind of covered all aspects of what I felt a performer should ideally be doing with their music,” said Elizabeth Janzen, 27, a flutist and fellow from Newfoundland. “It also allows me to go out and help in the public schools and hone my teaching skills. I’m a real advocate of the renaissance musician.”

Nadia Sirota, a 23-year-old violist who lives in New York, said the plan appealed to her definition of musician as entrepreneur. Such musicians should be comfortable playing in unusual settings like bars and galleries, she said. They should be able to initiate their own recording projects or concert series and should be open to contemporary music that appeals to all.

“We’re trying to peddle our wares to the general public rather than a tiny subset of the classical music audience,” she said.

Ms. Sirota said she grew up in a generation used to hearing that classical music was dying. “If you grow up hearing that, you’re going to try to fix it,” she said. “That’s an advantage this generation has.”

Ms. Sirota added that she looked forward to meeting other entrepreneurial colleagues.

“The biggest thing, honestly, is health insurance,” she said, laughing. “When you get out of school, you realize your entire safety net is pulled out from under you.”

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