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Ada students shine in recording project

OKLAHOMA CITY — Three Ada Chickasaw artists recently had the opportunity to stretch their creative wings in a unique recording project.

Courtney Parchcorn, Aubrey Halford and Kate Duty were among 11 Chickasaw students who directed and co-produced ETHEL, a New York-based string quartet, during a recording session of the students' musical compositions.

The three-day recording session was conducted at Oklahoma City University's Bass School of Music, Jan. 22-24. The songs will be featured in an album of works comprised solely of Native American student composers, which is set for a summer 2010 release by Thunderbird Records. During the session, students collaborated with Alan Bise, producer of Thunderbird Records, and directed the string quartet toward the sounds and feelings they were trying to convey in their music.

Bise said he was impressed by the students' composure during the recording session. "I am amazed at how confident these student-composers are. They are not shy at all about saying what they want."

"I wasn't sure how the students would react to an environment like this; it's a tough environment. The way they interact with everybody is really surprising and amazing."

"It's rare we get to work with living composers anyway, but they are working with a very professional group and they are handling it unbelievably well." Bise described the compositions as "great."

Students created the compositions during the Chickasaw Nation Summer Arts Academy under the direction of Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate. Tate, who is Chickasaw Nation's Composer in Residence, led the composition group at CSAA and oversaw the album recording. "We are extremely pleased to be part of this innovative project," said Gov. Anoatubby. "Our goal is to inspire these students to pursue their dreams, by giving them a glimpse into a world of possibilities and experiences. The students are remarkable and they should be very proud of what they have accomplished."

Courtney Parchcorn

Parchcorn's "Innocence" and "Enough" was selected to be recorded by ETHEL.

The 20-year-old was thrilled when she learned her music would be recorded professionally. Following her recording session, Courtney said, "ETHEL really met my expectations, it turned out the way I pictured it, the first time." Courtney has played the clarinet for the past seven years and is a former member of the Chickasaw Nation Children's Choir. She is also known for her Native American bead work.

Classical music is cool for Parchcorn because “I try to figure out the story that goes along with the music and how (the composer) was trying to put it together.” She is the daughter of Buddy and Fran Parchcorn, also of Ada.

Aubrey Halford

To say that Aubrey Halford was excited about the recording is an understatement. “For the last two months, it’s like I’ve been on a non-existent sugar high,” she said.

The 13-year-old feels having her compositions recorded by ETHEL is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. “It is a great feeling to know my works are highly appreciated in the classical world.”

Her works, entitled “Stages” and “Lullaby” were inspired by her varying taste in music and the peace that comes after hard times in life. “Composing music is so gratifying for me because you work so hard breaking each tiny part down and try to make it perfect,” she said, “and then hearing the whole piece played aloud is amazing.”

“It was a great experience to get to work with a group of such prestige.” Aubrey is an 8th grader at Ada Junior High School and is the daughter of Michael Halford.

Katelyn Duty

Duty’s song, “Here’s the Hunt,” was selected for the recording session.

Following her recording session, the 18-year-old said her song, “sounded better than I expected.” A college student in the LPN program, Katelyn clearly enjoyed her time in the control room. “It was really neat, I like being the boss, especially when I hear my music being played. They really bought out everything I wanted to hear.”

She encourages other would-be composers to embrace the chance to become a co-producer. “It’s definitely an experience; if anyone could get the chance they definitely should do it.”

Duty’s mother, Kathleen Duty, accompanied her daughter to the recording session. “It’s an amazing opportunity. She got the opportunity to talk about her feelings and the music,” said Mrs. Duty.

Formed in 1998, ETHEL is known for their adventurous and improvisational take on classical music. Julliard-trained performers that compose the group include Cornelius “Neil” Duffalo, violin; Ralph Farris, viola; Dorothy Lawson, cello; and Mary Rowell, violin.

Rowell said the quality of the works met and exceeded her expectations. “They have excellent people doing the recording, it’s very professional.”

“The Chickasaw Nation has been funding the arts and they are doing it right. Everything that has been needed has been provided.”

ETHEL has performed around the globe and collaborated with artists including Bang on a Can, The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the New York Chamber Symphony, CONTINUUM, Sheryl Crow, Roger Daltrey and Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Project.