

Musical Introduction Series Goes to China!

Dear 92nd Street Y School Partners:

On March 1 and 2, the 92nd Street Y was delighted to present the second concert in the 2010-11 Musical Introduction Series season, featuring the musically virtuosic and culturally dynamic Shanghai String Quartet.

Renowned throughout the world for their radiant expressiveness and lyricism, the Shanghai String Quartet melds the delicacy of Eastern music with the power of Western repertoire, from traditional Chinese folk music to the most challenging classical works, providing numerous entry points for a rich cultural and musical exploration for students of all ages.

Prior to the concert, MIS students explored the connection between Chinese folk music and nature through the song Jasmine Flower

(Mo Li Hua), a traditional Chinese folk song about a beautiful flower, singing the lyrics in Chinese and learning the traditional hand movements that accompany the song. At the concert, they performed Jasmine Flower with the Shanghai Quartet and a special guest who played the erhu, a traditional Chinese two-stringed instrument.

In a further exploration of the connection between music and nature, students created their own original Sumi-e style paintings, depicting natural landscapes in China as they imagined them to be. These student paintings were inspired by the Shanghai Quartet's arrangement of the traditional folk song, Miao Mountain Morning, which they performed at the concert while the students' work was projected to an onstage screen.

One of the biggest highlights of the concert was the celebration of the Chinese New Year with a traditional Lion Dance, complete with dancers in a traditional lion costume who performed with live percussion. Children interacted with the lion onstage by "feeding" it their good wishes of happiness for the new year, which were written on slips of paper and placed in small envelopes. It was a great pleasure to see the children's surprise and delight at this joyful culmination of our journey into traditional Chinese culture.

Following the Lion Dance, the concert shifted its journey to the world of European classical string quartet music. Students demonstrated their knowledge of four "Ways to Play" string instruments: staccato, legato, pizzicato and tremolo, and identified them in the Shanghai Quartet's performance of movements from works by Debussy and Beethoven.

We are extremely proud of the excellent work that your students accomplished in this unit of study. All of their effort and curiosity was apparent at the interactive concert, when they had the opportunity to sing, move, and share their knowledge with the Shanghai String Quartet. Their enthusiasm and excitement carried them through their journey to China and beyond.

With warm regards,

Larisa Gelman, Director

Debra Kreisberg, Managing Director