



To Teach, Perchance to Reach

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If there's one thing everyone can agree upon about The Music Center at Strathmore, it's this: The acoustics are stunning.

But for Monica Jeffries Hazangeles, Strathmore's president, it's not enough that audiences can see, hear, and be touched by the arts inside the building. She wants to bring everyone in the surrounding community closer.

That, she says, is done through arts outreach. "I think that 'outreach' takes all sorts of forms," says Hazangeles. "It's our responsibility as a community nonprofit organization to learn about every corner of the county, including at-risk and low-income populations where the opportunities to physically come to Strathmore are limited."

Most of the time, that effort is led by Lauren Campbell, Strathmore's director of education.

"Vivid experience and depth are two qualities that are really important to our programs," she says, "but the essential element is the magic of an artist interacting with the community."

She talks about a recent visit to Greencastle Elementary School in Silver Spring, one of several schools that Strathmore has partnered with to provide cultural experiences and foster enthusiasm for the arts. Step Afrika!—the first and only worldwide professional company dedicated to the tradition of stepping—



Members of Step Afrika! shared basic step moves and the origins and philosophy of step dancing with hundreds of middle school students. Hosting interactive experiences with artists is part of Strathmore's mission to provide artistic experiences for those who can't always come to Strathmore's campus.

was performing, and offering a workshop to students as well.

"It was electric to see the two groups together," says Campbell. "Every student was just riveted."

She describes the wonder of watching Step Afrika! teach a challeng-

ing routine to a local girls' step team and the students' ability to focus and quickly pick up the steps.

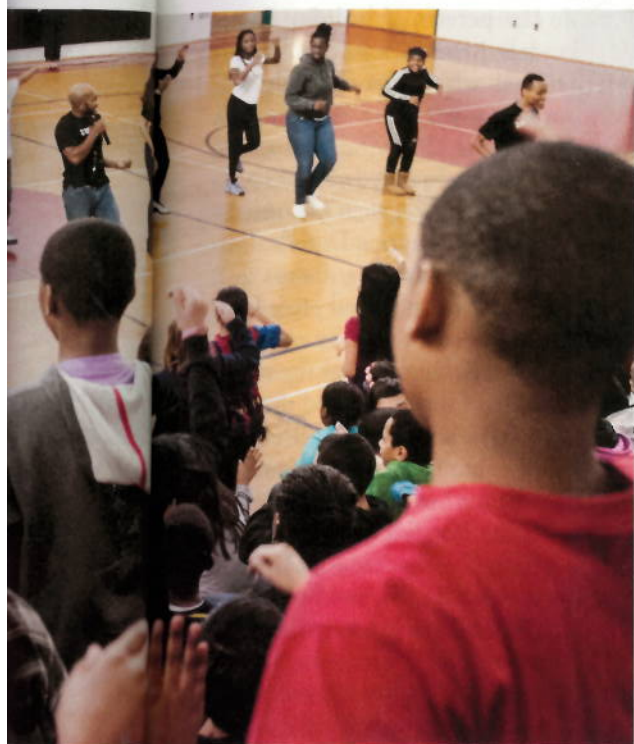
"They just got it," she says. "And their energy was so high as they performed at the end of the workshop." Such success stories happen as frequent-

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Strathmore's arts education programs move out into the community and continue to hit the high notes

By Chris Slattery



two guitarists and one flute player—there was an 8-year-old and every age up to 80—and it was a huge success.”

And she adds that what was to be a distant glimpse of superstar Chris Thile for 35 mandolin students turned into a spontaneous mini-concert and discussion during his sound check.

“That was a perfect expression of our aim to create moments of surprise,” Campbell says. “Beyond the goosebumps that come with an amazing performance, I’m always seeking this instant when an artist makes contact with the community and bam! You’ve got an unforgettable moment of connection and inspiration.”

Most arts centers provide education in some way, Campbell explains. “For some it’s a supplement, an extra ... for Strathmore it’s woven into the fabric of who we are.”

Which means that even as it offers traditional programs, such as pre-concert lectures, Strathmore also engages underserved populations through partnerships with organizations like Identity Inc., which provides support to at-risk Latino youth and their families.

“Some kids excel, some are skeptical—but nevertheless, they show up,” says Rosana Azar, whom Strathmore engaged to teach bilingual art classes for Identity’s after-school program. “Working with Identity is a way of reaching out to a different population, and I’m a

strong believer in the idea that when we develop the creative part of the brain, kids begin to think better in other areas.”

For Royce A. Wallace, magnet coordinator and assistant principal at A. Mario Loiederman Middle School for the Creative and Performing Arts in Silver Spring, an arts partnership with Strathmore is a way for students to inspire and connect with professional artists while strengthening their own artistic skills. He believes that participation in the arts builds skills that go beyond performance.

“In today’s world, individuals aren’t working alone anymore,” he says. “It’s all about working as a group, being part of a team, and arts participation encourages that kind of interactive style of work.”

Furthermore, Wallace says, Strathmore’s inclusive initiatives mean the students can grow up to become great consumers and appreciators of art. The thought’s not lost on Hazangeles.

“For Strathmore, arts outreach accomplishes many different things and takes on many different identities,” she explains. “But at the end of the day it’s a process of building the spokes of the wheel.

“We are the hub here on campus, but it’s the spokes we send out into the community that will keep us all spinning and turning together.” ☺

ly on the Strathmore campus as they do in the community, with performer-educators who offer educational outreach along with their Strathmore show.

“Alasdair Fraser, an internationally beloved Scottish fiddle player who also happens to be a master teacher, was performing at the Music Center and we created a workshop—a fiddle master class,” she says. “We were able to fill the room with 60 fiddle players,

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PHOTO BY LIZ LYNCH