

# Carroll County Times

## Arts flourish in Carroll

*By Hugh McLaurin, Columnist*

Even though I've lived in Carroll County for more than two decades, sometimes I feel like I'm still discovering its secrets.

The other evening I went to Winters Mill High School and listened to the Carroll Concert Band perform. Prior to that concert, I didn't know there was such a thing as the Carroll Concert Band.

The audience got to hear the numerous talents of local musicians and conductors as they performed a variety of musical works. The performance included the premiere of a composition written by a young composer raised in Carroll County, with lyrics adapted from the works of a local poet and sung by the angelic Children's Chorus of Carroll County. A pretty impressive display of Carroll's many talents for one evening.

The Children's Chorus is a personal favorite, as my daughter is a member. In fact, it's through the chorus that I've discovered many of the other musical activities that occur throughout the county. The chorus frequently performs with other local musical groups, which exposes these young singers to a universe of musical opportunity and talents. Those other groups are worth mentioning.

One of my favorites is the Masterworks Chorale of Carroll County, a group that includes singers from McDaniel College and many seasoned voices from the local community. Their work includes complex classical pieces and seasonal works that showcase some serious local talent.

A lot of local music emanates from the hilltop at McDaniel College. There you can find the rousing McDaniel College Gospel Choir, which manages to even get an uptight white guy like me moving in my seat. The McDaniel College Madrigal Singers, a richly costumed a cappella group, will lull you back to the Renaissance with their flawless harmonies.

Another terrific local group is the Old Line Statesmen Barbershop Chorus. Rarely will you see a group of men having such a good time while thoroughly entertaining the audience with finely blended harmonies that evoke another musical era.

One of the special things about this community of musicians is that they are exactly that: a community of friends and neighbors that support each other in many different ways, up front and behind the scenes. They often perform together in each other's concerts and in special benefit performances.

One of my favorite events is the annual concert to benefit the Carroll County Domestic Violence Safe House. This concert typically involves all the musical groups already mentioned, as well as local organists and the Westminster Trombone Choir. Prior to this concert I didn't know there was such a thing as the Westminster Trombone Choir.

Last spring, the Masterworks Chorale performed Carmina Burana, a stunning early 20th Century composition by Carl Orff. While the concert featured the Chorale, it also blended the talents of the Children's Chorus, the Westminster High School Percussion Ensemble and the dancers of the Westminster Ballet Theatre. As you might guess, prior to that concert I didn't know there was such a thing as the Westminster Ballet Theatre.

My hat goes off to all of the remarkable people who are a part of this local community, whether as artists and performers, as directors, teachers and organizers, or as benefactors. A great number of people dedicate their time, talent and money to these activities. We all owe them thanks for their hard work and willingness to share their gifts with us.

As a nation we've long recognized that the arts embellish our culture and enrich our lives. In this way we are very fortunate. Carroll County has a thriving community of arts and an artistic heritage that runs deep.

We're fortunate to be home to painters, sculptors, musicians and writers. We're fortunate to have colleges that foster the talents of young students and the local community. We're fortunate to have facilities like the Farm Museum to host events like the Fiddler's Convention. We're fortunate to be home to unique events like Common Ground on the Hill, not to mention the creative geniuses who conceive of such things and make them happen.

The list is long and the opportunities endless. If you have musical or artistic gifts of your own, get plugged in to this community and share your talents with the rest of us. If you're like me and love the arts but got left out of the talent gene pool, then show your support by going to the many local events that showcase music and art. With our support, the arts will continue to flourish in Carroll County.

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