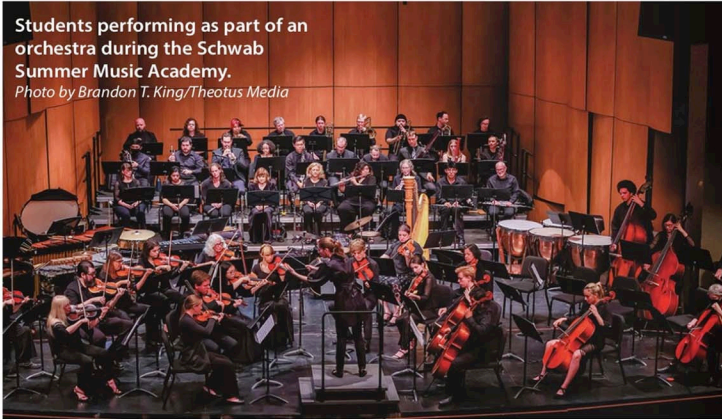


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Students performing as part of an orchestra during the Schwab Summer Music Academy.
Photo by Brandon T. King/Theotus Media



Percussionist Alexander Lewis.



Come, join and play

Schwab Summer Music Academy and Violin Competition

by Mike Nelson

Developing a skill is certainly reason enough to attend the Schwab Summer Music Academy at Ventura College. Add in the high quality of instruction offered (from leading professional musician-instructors) and the low price (less than \$100 tuition for the three-week session), and the benefits are multiplied.

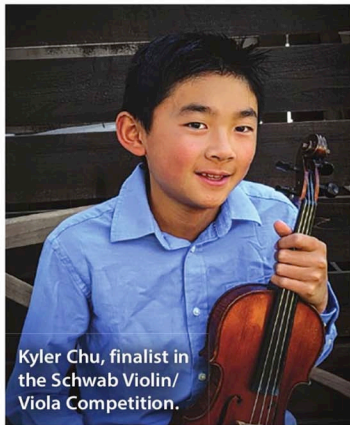
But there is another factor, in some ways even more compelling, for those who participate in this admittedly intensive but ultimately rewarding experience.

"Students who participate become part of a supportive, creative and passionate community," says Dr. Ashley Walters, music director and conductor for the Schwab Academy. "Our program supports the young musician finding their passion for music, the lifelong learner for whom music has always been an important part of their life, and the serious music student who is honing their skills to prepare for a career in music."

That cross-section of ages, backgrounds and skill levels is "a reflection of the community and the spirit of Ventura — friendly, neighborly, welcoming," says Brian Hotchkin, marketing and public relations director for the academy, whose third session begins July 3 and ends July 23.

"We see a lot of college-age students coming in, some high school students, more adult students returning, and some who are very young," says Hotchkin who, like Walters, is a member of the VC music faculty. "I'd call it a very egalitarian mentality and spirit: come, join and play."

The Schwab Music Academy was launched in 2019 with a \$12 million donation from local music lover Miriam Schwab, who wanted to offer an affordable opportunity to those wishing to develop their musical gifts. This year marks the third summer session (the 2020 and 2021 sessions were canceled by the coronavirus pandemic) that brings together dozens of music students of all ages.



Kyler Chu, finalist in the Schwab Violin/ Viola Competition.



Leonora Vukovitz, finalist in the Schwab Violin/ Viola Competition.
Photos by Brandon T. King/Theotus Media

"Music education teaches students more than just music," notes Walters, Ventura College's director of orchestras and chamber music. "It teaches students to develop



Beatrice Jiang, Schwab finalist.



Karl Baumgartner, Schwab finalist.
Photos by Brandon T. King/Theotus Media

a strong work ethic, how to work as a team player, how to communicate — verbally and non-verbally — through their instrument, how to make goals and how to meet them by organizing bigger goals into smaller tasks. Music provides students, of all ages, with an incredible community that can offer support and guidance as they discover and pursue their own dreams."

Adds academy founder and director Robert Lawson: "The students and facul-

ty become a family — working together daily and developing their skills in music communication with their ensembles, as well as presenting the performance to the community. And all are amazed at how well they progress."

Mentorship, collaboration and growth

For students, the process begins with an audition with Walters, who places them in orchestral or chamber music ensembles



Ashley Walters, Schwab music director, conductor.
Photo by Brandon T. King



according to skill level. Classes are held Monday through Friday at Ventura College's Performing Arts Center with instructional and chamber music ensembles meeting 1-4:30 p.m. and symphony orchestra meeting 5:30-9 p.m.

During that time, students receive one-on-one instruction from experienced teachers of national and international acclaim, many of them from the VC music faculty.

"Musicians with any level of experience receive constant tips and realize a ton of growth," says Hotchkin. "The mentorship aspect is very important. And at the same time they are improving their musical skill, they are also embracing the collaborative experience, supporting their fellow musicians and building community."

The academy offers courses in orchestra and chamber music for students of all ages who play strings, brass, woodwinds, percussion, keyboards and classical guitar. Concert performances are held throughout the session, with this year's orchestral concert selections including Verdi's "Nabucco Overture," Ravel's "Bolero," Grieg's "Peer Gynt Suite No.1" and Sibelius's "Finlandia."

"Our chamber music offerings will include works for four basses, guitar ensemble, string quartet, piano quintet, woodwind quintet, brass quintet, and more," says Walters. "I program music specifically for the students who enroll in

our ensembles, highlighting their musicianship and providing opportunities that are challenging yet attainable in the three weeks that we work together."

The Schwab Competition

Concluding the academy is the 13th Annual Henry Schwab Violin and Viola Competition to be held July 22 (7:30 p.m.) and 23 (2:30 p.m.). This year's event will be adjudicated by guest judges Mark Kashper and Melissa Phelps, both internationally known violinists from Southern California.

Category A finalists are Karl Baumgartner (West Ranch High School), Beatrice Jiang (Westlake Village High School) and Skyler Lee (Newbury Park High School). In Category B, finalists are Carlos Ozuna (Buena High School) and Kyler Chu and Leonora Vukovitz, both age 12.

Their repertoire will include selections by Mozart, Saint-Saëns, Dvorák, Mendelssohn and Schubert, played by academy students who form the orchestra and chamber ensembles.

"For the finalists," says Hotchkin, "it's often their first chance to play their concerto with an orchestra or ensemble. And the audience gets to see the results of the educational process. So it's exciting for everyone."

With pandemic-mandated delays hopefully in the past, the community's response to the Schwab Academy has been increasingly positive,

Carlos Ozuna and Skyler Lee, Schwab Competition finalists.

just as the participation has been increasingly widespread.

"Schwab is great at meeting all musicians at whatever skill level they are at," continues Hotchkin. "Students of all ages and all skill levels are welcomed here, and the result is a good community vibe, a come-as-you-are mentality that is also inspiring and supportive of one another." ♦

The Schwab Summer Music Academy take place July 3-23 at Ventura College. Concert performances are scheduled July 8, 14, 15 and 21, with the Henry Schwab Violin and Viola Competition scheduled July 22-23. To register and for additional information, visit www.venturacollege.edu/apply.



Photos by Brandon T. King/
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