

# Sharing a Gift

## Musician plays famed 'Red Violin' at B-P

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BROADALBIN - Almost 23 years ago, violin virtuoso Elizabeth Pitcairn received her well-known "Red Violin" as a gift from her grandfather.

On Monday night, Pitcairn shared the gift of music during a free concert at Broadalbin-Perth High School, where the sounds of her Stradivarius violin delighted those in the auditorium.

"I've had the time of my life being here today," she said.

### Article Photos



Pitcairn plays a selection on the famed "Red Violin" du...

In addition to the free concert - where Pitcairn played with pianist Barbara Podgurski - she also took part in programs for students in kindergarten through eighth-grade, and an afternoon "meet and greet" for all music students.

Pitcairn, 39, started playing the violin at the age of 3 after hearing the instrument live.

"I heard my mom rehearsing [the cello] with a violinist and she said I was glued to the violin [since then]," she said.

Pitcairn made her debut with an orchestra at 14. She is a faculty member at the Colburn School in Los Angeles, an alumna of the Marlboro Music Festival and a former faculty member at the University of Southern California.

Pitcairn said playing the violin is something she's always loved.

"I just have music coursing through my veins," she said.

School board President Ed Szumowski said he saw Pitcairn perform this summer at the Mayfield Presbyterian Church as part of a Sacandaga Valley Arts Network series.

"I was so impressed with her performance, I requested that the school somehow got her here," Szumowski said

He said the school is trying to inspire children to become more interested in music and the arts.

Broadalbin-Perth middle school art teacher Katherine Quackenbush said the performance helped bring more culture to the area.

"I'm speechless still," Quackenbush said. "To bring culture to this area is huge. Being an art teacher, we don't have enough arts and culture within the school so it was huge for her to come here and do this. It's just unbelievable."

Frank Marchitto - owner of A Violin Shop, Marchitto Violins & Cellos in Schenectady - said he heard about the concert and knew it was his opportunity to get another autograph.

Marchitto has a piece of music that was written for the violinist Yehudi Menuhin. He goes to concerts and watches violinists perform, then has them sign the piece of music.

Marchitto was particularly impressed with Pitcairn's performance.

"She was unbelievable," he said, "Her intonation and how she hits the notes was dead-on - For her to do this is amazing. Do you know how many kids never would have had the chance to see this? Who knows, maybe one of these kids was inspired to play today."

She said the most important factor in her success are the hours she's spent practicing.

Malcolm Gladwell, author of the book "Outliers," said it takes roughly 10,000 hours of practice to achieve mastery in a field. Pitcairn agrees whole-heartedly with that assessment.

"By the time I was 12 years old I was practicing four hours a day, so I've played roughly 40,000 hours since I started," she said. "And I still practice five hours a day."

She tells students that practice is the key to success but it can also be very difficult to motivate one's self to do it.

"I tell students to practice consistently and that the hardest part is getting the violin out of the case," she said. "They just have to have faith in themselves."

According to a news release, Pitcairn owns the famed "Stradivarius Red Mendelssohn Violin of 1720," which appeared to vanish for more than 200 years after its creation - causing much speculation about what happened to the instrument.

On Thanksgiving Day 1990, the release said, the "Red Violin" was anonymously put on the auction block at Christie's of London. It was reportedly purchased by Pitcairn's grandfather for \$1.7 million.

"While many of the world's most powerful [people] sought to win the coveted instrument, it landed in the hands of then-16 year old Elizabeth Pitcairn ..." the release said.

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