

South Whidbey Record

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VIEWPOINT

by Linda Good

Another Island Strings student finds success

Teo Benson's being chosen as one of the four Gold Medallists to play with the Seattle Symphony in Beethoven's Fifth is one in a series of firsts for him.

Teo, who started his lessons at age five, was the Island Arts Council Music Scholarship recipient in 1988 and the same year received a scholarship to attend a Suzuki Institute from the Suzuki Association of Washington State.

He was our first Island Strings student to perform in the first annual graduation recital at the state festival in Ellensburg, and then he amazed us by winning a second scholarship to attend another Suzuki Institute. In all, Teo has attended institutes in Seattle, British Columbia, and Idaho.

He joined the Everett Youth Symphony at a young age and, along with Jenny Ruthensteiner, placed among the winners of the Concerts on the Cove solo competition in May, 1995.

The Gold Medallist performers at Wednesday's Seattle Symphony concert on South Whidbey were chosen through recommendations by their high school band teachers.

We must be grateful that Coupeville's band teacher knew of Teo's musical achievements, because in past years schools without string programs have hardly even known of the existence of string players and have not alerted them to opportunities such as All State and All Northwest Orchestra.

Teo's parents worked out an arrangement with the district which enabled Teo to get a music credit for his many hours of private lessons, commuting both to Everett Youth Symphony and South Whidbey String Ensemble, as well as solo and group recitals.

Homeschoolers should be aware of the band emphasis. Three of four Gold Medallists were band students. There are many fine string students who are homeschoolers or who attend private schools. I suggest they get to know their district band teacher and let him/her know they are interested in competition and performance opportunities available to band students.