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Seven Plano Students Featured in Strings of Color Benefit Concert

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Strings of Color Orchestra performs the first of their 'Young Music Makers, Young Life Changers' concert series, at 6 p.m. Saturday, May 16 at Chase Oaks Church Youth Center in Plano (281 Legacy Dr., Bldg 201, 75023). Seven Plano residents are members of the orchestra: Jasmine Scott (second year, violin), Alex Robinson (second year, viola), Marques Swoopes (first year, violin), Ramfis Swoopes (second year, cello), Savannah Thigpen (second year, cello) Sedrick Wall (second year, bass, Plano) and Kadeem Wilson (first year, viola). A portion of proceeds from 'A Mother's May Benefit' dinner and concert will benefit The Happy Hill Farm Academy.



Strings of Color Orchestra rehearses for their May 16 concert at Chase Oaks Church Youth Center in Plano.

contributor information

Strings of Color Orchestra
Plano - E. Plano
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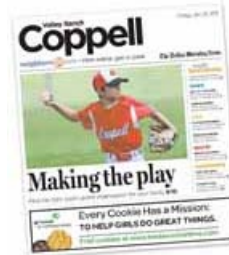
"We have always wanted to do a Mother's Day concert, especially since *Strings of Color* is a part of the non-profit I set-up in my mother's name," said SOC Founder and Director Ron Planks. "However, we didn't want it to conflict with any Mother's Day celebrations members and guests may have scheduled by actually doing the concert on Mother's Day weekend, so it really is a post-Mother's Day Concert. We were hoping that *Strings of Color* could provide one more opportunity for patrons to show 'mom' a wonderful night out while helping benefit a worthy cause - The Happy Hill Farm Academy."

Located in Granbury, for over 35 years Happy Hill Farm Academy has been giving socially and economically disadvantaged children with potential another chance in life within a unique, residential school and farm setting.

'A Mother's May Benefit' dinner and concert is the first in *Strings of Color's* 'Young Music Makers, Young Life Changers' concert series, and the first time the group is combining dinner and music.

"The purpose of the Young Music Makers, Young Life Changers concert series is to show that the Veta L. Morriel Arts and Leadership Academy, and *Strings of Color* is not only committed to offering quality arts in education programming, but is also an organization making those much needed charitable contributions," Planks said. "We believe this is a standard set in the nonprofit community long before us and it is our responsibility to pay forward what we have been given. It is also a wonderful way to teach our young members about giving and not just receiving."

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Planks plans on designating the last concert of every season as the next installment in the 'Young Music Makers, Young Life Changers' giving concert series. Highlights of 'A Mother's May Benefit' dinner and concert include saxophonist Calvin McGowen, live music by Soul Suga' and several instrumental solos by members of the *Strings of Color Orchestra*. Dinner will be provided by K&J Catering.

In this, its second season, *Strings of Color* added an even greater diversity to their performances. Audiences are also treated to solos from *Strings of Color Juniors*, elementary school age performers.

"It's exciting to see how the program is growing so quickly," Planks said. "Students travel from as far away as Ft. Worth and Arlington to be a part of the orchestra."

Strings of Color will be performing in the foyer at the Meyerson Symphony Center at 7 p.m. on Friday, June 19 prior to the Dallas Symphony performance for their African American & Latino Festival. On May 30, *Strings of Color* will perform for the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority's Pearls & Ivy Cotillion in Richardson, Texas. The season began with an outstanding performance at Mt. Hebron Missionary Baptist Church in Garland, Texas, then continued with "Stringin', Singin' & Soul" in February at Chase Oaks Church in Plano, Texas.

Orchestra members have been working and practicing long and hard in anticipation of their upcoming May 16 performance. Members are: Okechi Akagha (first year, violin/intern conductor, Murphy), Alicia Best (first year, bass, Ft. Worth), Ariel Bowman (second year, violin, Murphy), Kellie Brooks (second year, viola, Arlington), Xavier Degrate (second year, violin, Murphy), Bree' Anna Farlough (second year, cello, Richardson), Reuben Frank (first year, violin, Murphy), Imani Handy (first year, violin, McKinney), Andrew Hodge (second year, cello, Murphy), Xavier Hubbard (second year, violin, Richardson), Mickala Johnson-Gomez (second year, cello, Carrollton), Curlita Meshack (second year, violin, Dallas), Dominic Reed (first year, viola, Plano), Jasmine Scott (second year, violin, Plano), Alex Robinson (second year, viola, Plano), Alexis Smith (second year, violin, Richardson), Richie Smith (first year, violin, Richardson), Marques Swoopes (first year, violin, Plano), Ramfis Swoopes (second year, cello, Plano), Savannah Thigpen (second year, cello, Plano) and Sedrick Wall (second year, bass, Plano), Kadeem Wilson (first year, viola, Plano).

"A Mother's May Benefit" begins at 6 p.m. Saturday, May 16 at Chase Oaks Church Youth Center (281 Legacy Dr., Bldg 201, Plano, Texas, 75023). Tickets for "A Mother's May Benefit" can be purchased in advance at www.StringsOfColor.com. Ticket purchase deadline is May 13. There is no reserved seating. Arrive early for best seating selections. Ticket prices range from \$15 to \$30, and entire tables are also available. A portion of the dinner and concert proceeds will benefit The Happy Hill Farm Academy.

About Strings of Color Orchestra

Founded and directed by Ronald Planks, *Strings of Color* is designed for up and coming young musicians, with members range from middle school to college-level experience. Talented students from across north Texas audition for the orchestra in the fall; twenty-two are currently in the orchestra.

Born out of a desire to provide young string players of all racial backgrounds a venue to showcase their talent, *Strings of Color's* target members are string players within the African American community. For more information, visit www.StringsOfColor.com.

Expanding the vision, *Strings of Color* has merged with the Veta L. Morriel Arts and Leadership Academy, a connection intended to provide added opportunities to this talented group of young performers. The

theme always centers on music and arts, but will also provide important guidance beyond the music with leadership training, mentoring and advisement.

Visit the Academy's Web site at www.vlmala.org.

About Ron Planks

Strings of Color Orchestra Founder and Director Ronald Planks is in his eleventh year as director of orchestral studies at Williams High School in Plano, Texas. Mr. Planks received his Bachelor of Music Education and Masters of Music degrees from Sam Houston State University where he studied conducting with Dr. Carol Smith. While at Sam Houston, he studied violin and viola with Dr. James Gardner and Joy Plesner respectively. Prior to his present position, Mr. Planks taught in the Bryan and Spring Branch Independent School Districts. His orchestras have consistently won Sweepstakes awards at the UIL Concert and Sight-reading Contests. Mr. Planks also has had several students selected for region and all-state orchestras. Mr. Planks resides in Plano, Texas and performs extensively as a freelance musician and is a member of the north Dallas-based *Appassionato String Quartet*.

About Calvin McGowen

Calvin McGowen is a native of McKinney and a senior at McKinney LINC Center. At a very young age he began playing can 'instruments,' which was the beginning of his musical journey. Currently, Calvin plays drums, piano and saxophone accompaniment at his church. He currently is employed at McKinney ISD, where he works with elementary age children in after school activities. He plans to pursue a career in law enforcement. Calvin says that in the end he wants to do whatever God wants him to do.

About Soul Suga'

Soul Suga' was recently formed when guitarist Mike Whitley and percussionist Mike Franklin met while working on their own solo CD releases. With selections of Neo-Soul, R & B and Smooth Jazz, their vision is to showcase individual talents while also highlight the group. Soul Suga' members include Kande Harden (lead vocals), Kimberle Harden (background vocals), Reginald Jackson (background vocals), Mike Whitley (guitars), David Paraham (keyboards), Mike Franklin (percussion), Eric Morrison (bass) and Vincent Ward (drums).

Posted by [Strings of Color Orchestra](#) May 6, 2009 12:25 PM, [Comments \(0\)](#)

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