

Ansel Norris Addresses His School Board



Ansel Norris, a sixteen-year-old trumpeter and Jack Kent Cooke Young Artist Award recipient, wrote a letter to the Board of Education in his hometown of Madison, WI regarding the decline of music education in public schools. He was then allowed to share his inspiring words at the School Board's 2009 budget meeting.

"Without continued support from the public schools, I believe that the skill level of up-and-coming musicians will decline, and this would be a terrible thing for the world."

He shares his address to the Board below:

My name is Ansel Norris. I am a young trumpet player at Madison East High School, and music is what I plan to do for the rest of my life.

I got my start on music at the young age of four, when I picked up the violin. For this, the credit can go completely to my mother. She was and is dedicated enough to my success that she will go to great lengths to ensure it. My motivation for music, at that time, was slim to none. I moved on to the piano at the age of seven, hoping that it would pique my interest. Although it did not at the time, I can give my family credit for keeping me interested in music.

However, when I entered the band room of O'Keeffe Middle School with trumpet in hand, there wasn't anybody supporting me or bothering me to practice. All I had was the O'Keeffe Middle School 6th Grade Band, the teacher, and my young colleagues. And coincidentally, through encouragement by my

school band directors, my parents got involved as well. One thing led to another, and through a great deal of perseverance, practice, motivation and luck, I was able to make several large-scale achievements that will continue to push me toward a career in trumpet.

You see, in those days, I had band class four days a week. Now, in 2009, the Madison School District are granting kids 2 days or less.

Music is something that has the power to inspire people. Through many wars, invasions, terrorist attacks, economic crashes, raised gas prices, and the many other things the world can throw, music has survived and will always survive. Because of music, the world's cultures have remained unique and diverse for thousands of years.

In addition to this, musical training in youth keeps children out of trouble, as well as providing the opportunity for a career that is inspiring to oneself as well as others. The many musicians out in the world give people enjoyment, diversity, inspiration, rhythm, and spice in their lives. Although many do not know it, everyone appreciates the effects that music has had on the world.

However, without sufficient education in public schools, the level of musicianship of young students will decline. The wave of students who have been swept up by the appeal of classical music will blow over, and a new generation will not be waiting to replace them. This is where your assistance and compassion are needed.

With the collective energy and passion of the entire world of music, we implore you. Please put more of your time into the revival and sustenance of classical music. The funding that the public schools need is being channeled into other things that are less useful to society. Music needs to stay alive and continue to grow through the changes in the world, and you can help with this.

Thank you very much for your time. I as well as the future generation of outstanding musicians will never forget your contribution to classical music.