

## **Charlotte Symphony Orchestra**

Charlotte, North Carolina

**Category:** Teacher Training; Arts Integration; Artist Residency; Evaluation; Curriculum Writing; Multiple Intelligences

At Winterfield Elementary School, first graders are “shiver-shiver-shivering” to the music of Vivaldi’s “Four Seasons.” And they’re learning language arts, music and movement as they do it. Since the 2000-2001 school year, the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra has held eight-session classical music residencies at Winterfield Elementary each year for first and second graders.

Winterfield is so much a neighborhood school that when the Family Choice Plan was implemented in 2003 in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, most of the Winterfield families chose to remain at the school. The school has historically been one of the most ethnically diverse schools in the system, with a lovely mix of Vietnamese, Hispanic, African American and European American children. Many of the school families are recent immigrants. With a great number of students learning English in ESL classes, how perfect it is that they are also learning from professional Charlotte Symphony musicians, who not only help them learn English through the universal language of music, they also bring an international perspective to classical music. They honor the traditions of their students by sharing the ways that the different cultures of these students have influenced classical music.

So back to those first graders, who are learning that music and words can tell stories, and studying the four sonnets that Vivaldi wrote to go with his concerto. They work with clarinet player, Donna Black and harpist Christine Van Arsdale to pluck words from the sonnets like notes from Christine’s harp strings, to explore the concepts of onomatopoeia and word choice as they repeat words from Vivaldi’s sonnets and move in time to the concerto. “Words start to become imbued with the quality of the sound,” says Susan Miville, Director of Education, Outreach and Community Partnership at the Charlotte Symphony, “and then that encourages them to write in greater detail.”

Meanwhile the second graders are being inspired by music with flute player Shirley Gilpen and percussionist Daveed Korup to figure out antonyms. Low/high, loud/soft, large/small: antonyms are tough for a small (or large) second grader to comprehend but these words are easier to understand through music and movement. From antonyms, the students move on to adjectives and adverbs, descriptive terms that come alive through classical music. They keep deepening their understanding of writing through music into similes, metaphors and finally whole stories and full musical scores with poems and illustrations, all reflecting each other.

The Charlotte Symphony Orchestra approaches its work with Winterfield very seriously, focusing its grant money on professional development and evaluation; designing thematic units of study that incorporate lessons of classroom teachers, special area teachers and musician-educators as partners; using the principles of Multiple Intelligences; embedding assessment tools into lesson plans to clearly support instructional objectives; including more diverse cultural expression to lead to an increased respect for others; and involving parents and the community with the view to encourage life-long learning.

The musicians are giving everything they’ve got, sharing everything they know, speaking in English and Spanish and the language of notes and sharps and flats. The students and teachers at Winterfield? Well, learning is now music to their ears.

**Charlotte Symphony Orchestra:** [www.charlottesymphony.org](http://www.charlottesymphony.org)

**Multiple Intelligences:** [www.pz.harvard.edu](http://www.pz.harvard.edu)