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Talented Lamorinda Students Perform with UC Berkeley Chorus

Submitted by Xiomara Di Maio



Photo Sunita Ho

Marika Kuzma, director of choirs at UC Berkeley, recently invited Xiomara Di Maio, director of the Lamorinda School of Musical Arts, Stanley Middle School Chorus vocal coach/accompanist and San Francisco Boys Chorus preparatory director, to assemble a children's choir for the performances of Carl Orff's Carmina Burana that took place on Oct. 24 and 25 at Hertz Hall in Berkeley. The hope was to include children from the Lamorinda area.

After Di Maio sent a message to all the music teachers in the area letting them know about the invitation, Bob Athayde at Stanley Middle School, Susan Comber at Lafayette Elementary School, and Christina Engelbrecht, music program coordinator for children and youth at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church responded. The teachers passed the word to their students, and 13 families committed to a series of rehearsals and

performances in September and October that led to a successful and life changing experience.

The students, ranging in age from 7 to 13, included Sophie Kessler, Stephanie Liu, Veronica Mesaros, Katie Bettencourt, Helena Holmberg, Michael Brennan, Paige Towery, Rachel Zang, Arden Searer, Ela Giftgi, Nia Ho, Jenna Englehart and Lindsey Lewis. The students attend Orinda Intermediate School, Lafayette Elementary and Stanley Middle School.

"The kids' singing and presence were superb," said Di Maio. "The guest artists, the UC Berkeley chorus, audience members, and UC Berkeley Chorus Director Marika Kuzma were very impressed with their performances, and we were invited back. It takes passion, discipline and focus to do something like this. I was very pleased with the results, and the kids are looking forward to the next opportunity!"

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