

## In Our Neighborhoods

# Bringing Music "Bach" to Schools

"You're never too young to learn to appreciate classical music," says Maxine Fisher, Queens College English literature professor and director of the New York/Paris Exchange Program. She should know. Fisher, who grew up in Maspeth, fell in love with classical music at an early age. And now, as a labor of love, she's bringing free classical musical concerts to elementary and middle schools in Queens as part of a program she's created called Bach to School. Fisher created the program with the support of Edward Smaldone, director of QC's Aaron Copland School of Music (ACSM).

Fisher recalls her mother playing old opera recordings at home and taking her by bus and subway in the heat of summer to free classical concerts in Manhattan before she even

started school. She advises parents to listen with their children to recordings of classical music—especially ballets and symphonic suites that tell a story, such as Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker Suite" and "Swan Lake," Stravinsky's "The Firebird," and Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade."

There are also radio and television stations that specialize in classical music programming, Fisher says, such as WQXR-FM, New York's public radio station. "Even just a few minutes of listening each day with your children will have a great impact on their musical appreciation for years to come," she says.

The PBS network offers "Great Performances," a series of six concerts broadcast live from Lincoln Center each year, which brings the world's greatest artists to millions



Queens College English professor Maxine Fisher with (left to right) John Kelly, Ryan Oberlin, Anthony Izzo, and Thomas Lee, saxophonists from the college's Aaron Copland School of Music.

of home viewers. In addition, the New York Philharmonic Orchestra performs free live outdoor evening concerts each summer in several borough parks.

Fisher, who feels that music education is not a high enough priority in schools, makes classical pieces interactive, fun, and easy to understand for young students through her Bach to School program. Fisher turns the experience into a game, and her

reward comes when an audience of young children—"most of whom have never heard a classical piece," she says—raise their hands excitedly when they "get it."

Using a \$1,500 grant from the Queens College Foundation, Fisher will give free concerts this spring at public schools in East Elmhurst, Woodside, and Middle Village, accompanied by musicians from ACSM.