



come to realize that Beethoven had the same power and feeling as the modern rock or hip hop that people hear on the radio today," Ruth says. Their theory is that all music comes from the same source, no matter if it's Jay-Z or Bach. Indeed, now that speakers have been installed on the outside of the CMW building, classical music has joined salsa, rap, and hip-hop as part of the soundtrack to West End life.

The original goal of CMW was to explore how music can play a significant role in the lives of kids as they discover themselves. The ramifications of such a concept are just awe-inspiring. Imagining what quality musical instruction could do to fortify the younger generation of would-be musicians makes my head spin. The current drought of musical substance on modern radio is nothing short of frightening. What with the onslaught of the various and sundry Britneys, Ashlees, and Jessicas, it's beginning to look like the last good CD produced was an album. If this is all the "music" our culture has left to offer, I am going to seal up my ears with bathroom caulking and take up humming. With the desire to see the kids allay my worst fears, I went to see the CMW gang on a January afternoon. I admit that I had to Mapquest my way over to the Met School's Peace Street campus; the rookie that I am doesn't navigate the West End streets that well. But just walking into the scene that I encountered was enough to renew my faith.

**J**umaane Smith, a trumpet player from NYC and protégé of Wynton Marsalis, is absolutely smokin' up the joint on trumpet, backed by Craig Polasko on bass, and Carmen Intorre on drums. The trio slips and slides along jazz rhythms spun from improvisational gold and holds its audience rapt. They could be jamming out in any jazz club from here to the Bayou, but here they are on Dexter Street in Providence.

The audience is about 20 children ranging in age from 7-17 with violins on their laps, poised and ready. The trio holds one perfect, final note and Smith lowers his trumpet. He looks at the kids with an exultant grin, "Did you hear the difference between the Latin and the jazz?" he asks. Some of the kids nod. Others shoot hands in the air, feverish with questions. Smith answers them all, discussing baselines, chord changes, and harmonic progression.

This is one of CMW's sponsored workshops that take

place once a month for the students of the program. Over the years, the children have been exposed to just about every genre of music from African drumming to Celtic strings and everything in between. Usually, there is a per-

## *As the whole room realized what they had become a part of, smiles broke out from the young violinists*

formance by groups both local and not, after which, the kids have a chance to practice their instruments. During this particular workshop, performance and practice merged as one under Smith's clever direction.

"Jazz is improvisation. It's a conversation between instruments. The goal is to get them to respond to each other," Smith says. He invites them to raise their string instruments and play. They oblige him and look up, ready for more direction. They are told to play three more bars of D, two of G, two more of D, and so on until all 20 of them are heard sawing out a basic melody. They repeat it over and over until finally, Smith signals to the other two men to begin playing and before you can say down and lonely, the whole group is officially playing the blues. As the whole room collectively realized what they had become a part of, smiles broke out from the young violinists, parents began to nod, and even a little boy who was standing off to the side of the trio began rocking and swaying in time to the music.

It was magic.

**A**lthough Ruth says that he wanted to use the music as a catalyst for kids to be thinking about other opportunities that they might have in their lives, there are those among the group who have clearly decided that music would, in fact, be the center of their greatest aspirations. Carolina Jimenez has been playing the cello with CMW for the past seven years. It's hard to believe that a 14-year-old freshman at Classical High was ever anything but the articulate and poised young lady that she is today, but she'll be the first to tell you that it wasn't always easy for her to talk to people. "With the music, I feel kind of like I can tell people how I feel without

having to say anything," she says. She goes on to tell me that she would like to be a composer and a conductor some day. And when informed of the possibility that she could be the first female composer of Dominican descent, to which she replied, "It makes me feel sad that not a lot of people have this opportunity. There should be more people doing this — no matter who they are."

Yet another student who has taken his experiences with CMW to the next level is 15 year-old James Marcil. Now here is a kid who will restore your faith in the future of American music. Marcil started playing violin with CMW three and a half years ago when his sister decided that she didn't want the spot. Since then, he has taken what he learned about the violin and taught himself how to play a mean guitar. During the workshop he didn't just play, he wailed on that axe, jamming along with the trio. Decker out in the requisite black Chuck Taylors and shaggy hair falling in his eyes, Marcil made it look easy; a sign of true talent. He has already opened for Steve Smith and the Naked along with his band, The Ingredients and cites Buddy Guy, Muddy Waters, Pink Floyd, and BB King among his musical influences.

I felt like yelping out an "Amen!" just at the idea that someone of the Xbox generation even knows who BB King is. So, does he want to be a huge rock star? Sure, he smiles, "But really I would like to just live off playing the music that I love." Imagine that. He didn't even mention groupies.

These inspiring moments are everyday occurrences at CMW. Never before has such a powerful entity as classical music been eased so seamlessly into a neighborhood that wouldn't normally have the experience. Rhode Islanders have the chance to witness the program in action on several occasions throughout the year during open performances. You won't want to skip a beat. **PH**

### NOTES

On April 2, CMW's Spring Fundraiser will take place. You can also catch them again on April 28 when they'll play a free concert at The Met School. For more info, log onto [www.communitymusicworks.org](http://www.communitymusicworks.org).