

## Music Making at the YMCA of Greater Westfield

*“Music is exciting. It is thrilling to be sitting in a group of musicians playing (more or less) the same piece of music. You are part of a great, powerful, vibrant entity.*

Dan Rather – journalist and former news anchor

I have been asked a few times in my life, “What’s it like to be part of a group of individuals engaged in the process of creating a melodious, coherent stream of sounds otherwise known as making music?” To be perfectly frank, it is not something that one could ever fully understand or know unless one has experienced it. It’s not just about playing music, which in and of itself can be extremely satisfying and rewarding. No, it’s more than that. And it’s more than just a group of people gathered together having fun, like at a neighborhood picnic. Words really fall short to define this experience, but I will do my best to describe it, from my amateur musician perspective.

Perhaps an analogy might be helpful. Maybe you’ve had the opportunity to observe a honeybee colony in action. Each bee within the hive has a role to play in making the honey. The bees work beautifully alongside one another to produce the thick sweet syrup; the final outcome of their collaborative work. So too, whether it is an orchestra or a band or a choir, each person within the group contributes to the total musical expression through their own unique musical voice, if you will. The musicians in each section support one another’s voice or instrumental expression. In a choir situation, the altos sing the harmony in unison with one another, while the sopranos sing the melody. Ditto for the tenors and bass section. The musicians ride each others notes, carefully tuning in with one another, and the waves of sound blend together forming a larger cohesive sound.

It’s all quite a mystery how notes on a musical staff are lifted off the paper and enter into our hearts, generating a full spectrum of emotional feelings. They are transmuted ambassadors of emotion, delivered through the medium of musical sound. Their resonance tickles our eardrums and suddenly we find ourselves joyful or sad and sometimes, a mixture of both. We may daydream, or memories from long ago may surface to our consciousness. We might cry or dance or fall down on the ground, flattened by the waves of sound that trigger some immense emotion. It’s really kind of amazing when you think about the profound power that music has upon our three pound universe, otherwise known as our brain.

No wonder that so many of us feel the call to sing or play an instrument. The ability to make music adds another level of enjoyment. Moreover, the wonderful thing about music is that anyone can learn to sing or play an instrument at any age. If you have the

desire to create music, there is always a way. At the YMCA of Greater Westfield, there are many opportunities to give music a try.

For those who might like to sing, there is no more enjoyable time to be had than on Wednesday mornings when the YMCA's American Classics Choir meets to sing tunes from the 1940s through the present day. They take that fun on the road and share with local audiences their music several times a year. Worried that you can't carry a tune? We'll help you find the notes through some excellent guidance by our Music Director, Amy Tosi.

We also offer private music lessons in keyboard/piano, guitar and vocal.

Sure, you might feel a bit intimidated taking up guitar lessons at a more advanced age or singing in a choir. That is only natural. But I can assure you, it is all well worth overcoming that fear and plunging into the experience.

Some 40 years ago, I took my first piano lesson at a Y; a YWCA actually, but nonetheless a Y. A world of opportunity and joy opened up for me. Beyond the sheer excitement that music has brought to my life, I have met and worked with many wonderful musicians. Did I have butterflies rocking my stomach before those performances? You bet! But wow, when the music began; voices rising in unison, each of us musicians tuning in to each other, watching the conductor for our cues, well, there just aren't words for it. Just like the beehive and all the bees working hard, we made a little honey, maybe not the best on the block, but how sweet it was.

Rosann Scalise

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