

Celia Bachelder, orchestra teacher and director (long term ETSBOA member and committee chairperson)

Bachelder, a violinist who joined the Kingsport Civic Symphony Orchestra as a young teenager in 1946, played in the symphony for 62 years before retiring this season (2009).

She began violin lessons as a young girl, first studying with her mother. As her love for music developed over the years, she joined the newly-established Kingsport Civic Symphony Orchestra in 1946 and continued playing in that ensemble, now known as Symphony of the Mountains, through last season.

She founded and led the Dobyons-Bennett High School Orchestra in 1975, a position she held for 20 years. During her tenure at Dobyons-Bennett, the orchestra grew in numbers and in statewide and national recognition. The group competed at a variety of festivals, always winning top rankings for their performances, including appearances at the Mid-West Band and Orchestra Convention, a prestigious annual festival held in Chicago.

She was also instrumental in introducing Suzuki string training to Kingsport — an organization now known as Suzuki Talent Education of Appalachia (STEA). Many of the STEA students joined the Sevier and Robinson Middle School Orchestras and Dobyons-Bennett High School Orchestra as they continued their music education. The Suzuki method of teaching is known as the mother-tongue approach to learning founded by Shinichi Suzuki, a violinist, educator, philosopher and humanitarian who devoted his life to the development of the method he calls Talent Education.

Bachelder taught and nurtured hundreds of students during her tenure at Robinson Middle School and Dobyons-Bennett High School. Many of those students have continued their love of music performing with the Symphony of the Mountains Youth Orchestra and the Symphony of the Mountains, among others. Several have followed Bachelder's love of music performance and education and made it their own career.

Symphony of the Mountains Assistant Concertmaster Dr. Kellie Dubel Brown, now Chair of the Music Department at Milligan College and Director of Orchestras, was one of Mrs. Bachelder's students. "Celia Bachelder was one of my most important mentors, both while I was a high school student, and then later as a teacher. She inspired a whole generation of string players in Kingsport," stated Dr. Brown.

AAME, Volume 20, Number 8 — August 2013

Current Information

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