

Master violist shares wisdom as Jackson High School students prepare for Carnegie Hall concert

April 22, 2008

By ERIC STEVICK

Even the best get nervous at Carnegie Hall.

Emanuel Vardi, who once played a solo viola performance for Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the White House and has worked with Lionel Hampton and Louis Armstrong, well remembers the butterflies when he took the stage at Carnegie Hall in New York years ago.

“The walk from the backstage to the middle of the stage felt like a mile,” Vardi, 92, told music students at Henry M. Jackson High School last week.

Vardi, who has been called the world's leading viola soloist, and his wife, Lenora, an accomplished violinist, visited the campus last week to share words of wisdom before 77 members of the school's wind ensemble perform at the musical landmark May 24.

Unlike Jackson's ensemble, Vardi played a solo performance at Carnegie Hall in May.

“Being in a band, there is one advantage,” he reassured the students. “There is safety in numbers.”

The couple, who recently moved to North Bend, has performed in prestigious venues and festivals around the world. They have recorded with the likes of Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett and Ray Charles. Emanuel has written, composed and conducted music for many movies, including the theme music for the 1990 movie *Romeo-Juliet*. Both have produced music.

They offered the same advice to the Jackson students: practice, practice, practice.

“You have to be very, very prepared,” Lenora Vardi said.

“This is a big deal for you guys.”

Philip Allen, 18, a Jackson senior and percussionist, enjoyed hearing the Vardis' stories and the marquee names of artists they performed with. He was excited before their talk and perhaps was even more so afterward.

“This is an opportunity of a lifetime,” he said. “I just know I'm going to do the best to be as prepared as I can and he just inspired me to play as well as I possibly can.”



photo by Kevin Nortz

The couple had another suggestion for aspiring musicians: Explore all the arts.

That's the advice his father, a violin teacher, gave him when he was 4 or 5 years old.

Emanuel Vardi, one of only two violists to give a solo recital at Carnegie Hall, remembers his band experiences as a child while talking to the Jackson High School band on Thursday. The high school band is set to perform at Carnegie Hall in May.

“He said in order to be a good musician, you have to know all the arts,” he said.

The Vardis are both professional painters.

Emanuel has sold more than 100 of his works.

Band director Lesley Moffat said she believes the Vardis' talk got her students “a step closer” to being prepared for the Carnegie experience.

“It was fun to hear about all of their experiences, but a bit sobering to be reminded that if they even got nervous on that stage that we better be more than prepared for the concert,” Moffat said. “I don't know yet if the kids comprehend the responsibility of being a part of the historic hall, but I do know that once they get there that they will be hit with the sheer magnitude of it all.”