

Decades later, 'Tubby the Tuba' still hits high note with kids

Berkshire Music School orchestrates visits through local grants

By JENN SMITH
The Berkshire Eagle

ADAMS — Hoosac Valley Elementary School music teacher Jonathan Rowe watched his students sit in the school's auditorium Friday afternoon, mesmerized by the melodies of violin, cello, trumpet, piano, piccolo and tuba. Some kids tapped their feet or danced in their seats. A couple of them could even be seen conducting alongside the ensemble.

"I think this is wonderful," Rowe said.

Six musicians and a narrating vocalist performed for the whole school their version of the classic children's concert "Tubby the Tuba." The original orchestra recording includes lyrics by Paul Tripp and music composed by George Kleinsinger from 1945, but the piece still holds its own today.

The enduring tale of a tuba who is tired of playing "oompah" and desires to play a lively little melodic tune with the rest of his orchestra mates shares life's universal themes of longing for acceptance and friendship.

The music is usually performed by an orchestra, but tuba player Eli Newberger arranged the work for the smaller Berkshire group, which includes his wife, Carolyn, on woodwinds and the washboard, cellist Bob Van Wart, Joe Rose on keyboard, violinist Christine Singer, Rob Fisch on trumpet and narrator Jeff Bratway.

Eli Newberger used to be a part of the Boston Symphony Orchestra productions of "Tubby the Tuba" and later converted the chamber group to the Cupcake Philharmonic Orchestra to perform the show for children.

"Orchestras these days are not mounting children's concerts anymore," he said. Which is why he said he is glad Berkshire Music School is supporting it.

The recent Hoosac Valley Elementary School visit just about wraps up



Inset: Eli Newberger plays a circa 1907 Holton Del Negro CC tuba during Friday's presentation of the classic children's concert "Tubby the Tuba" at Hoosac Valley Elementary School in Adams. The program was made possible through grants received by the Berkshire Music School. Above: The recent visit to Hoosac Valley Elementary just about wraps up a year of the Berkshire Music School ensemble's tour to some local schools to share the program and more about the instruments they play.

PHOTOS BY JENN SMITH — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

a year of the Berkshire Music School ensemble's tour to some local schools to share the program and more about the instruments they play.

"It is our way of bringing professional musicians and instruments in to the schools where children might not have the opportunity to see orchestral instruments live in concert or at Tanglewood," said Berkshire Music School Outreach Coordinator Sherri James Buxton.

During the show, which she emceed, she projects behind the group PowerPoint slides of the vibrant 2006 book version of "Tubby the Tuba," il-

lustrated by Henry Cole.

Last year, in conjunction with the Norman Rockwell Museum, Berkshire Music School presented "Willie Was Different," a story by Norman Rockwell about a wood thrush with a magical gift for music.

"Our outreach program has become very popular in the county," Buxton said. "We have been doing assemblies and after-school ukulele or guitar workshops at several elementary schools in the county for the past few years."

These programs are offered at no cost to students. This year's "Tubby

the Tuba" program is sponsored through the Berkshire Teconic Community Foundation's William J. & Margery S. Barrett Fund for Adams, Berkshire & Savoy.

Rowe said the extra programming helps supplement what he has budgeted to do for his students, which is provide one 45-minute music grade-level class a week for kids in kindergarten through Grade 3. He said that by exposing kids to performances and artists, "it gives them inspiration to want to continue to practice their music and broaden their horizons."