

Music sets the stage for learning English

A distinguished mezzo-soprano and a revered educator, Maura Sharkey-Pryma's life is a testament to the transformative power of music. Her academic credentials, including a Bachelor and Masters of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of Alberta, are just the prelude to her profound impact on the world of music education.

Maura's philosophy is rooted in the belief that music is an essential element of human experience. "Music is a universal language that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers, connecting us in ways words cannot," she said.

This conviction drives her to inspire and nurture musicians and emerging artists, instilling in them not just the skills to perform, but the wisdom to appreciate music's role in life. It's for these reasons that she created the Learn English Through Singing Program The Sharkey Method™ (LETS), which helps newcomers to Canada improve their English speaking skills through singing. It has been such a popular program that SMEA sponsored the expansion of this program into Saskatchewan.

The benefits of learning music extend far beyond the concert hall. Engaging with music from a young age fosters cognitive development, enhances coordination, and cultivates emotional sensitivity. Research has consistently shown that children who study music tend to excel academically; and display advanced reading skills, mathematical understanding, and even higher IQ scores. Maura champions this cause, asserting, "Introducing children to music is not just about discovering talent; it's about enriching their lives and broadening their horizons."

Maura added that the value of music education is also evident in its social benefits. "Music brings people together, creating communities and building bridges," she said.

It encourages collaboration, teaches patience, and develops listening skills that are crucial in every aspect of life. These skills also translate into a student's later professional career by fostering effective communication and innovative thinking.

"Music has always been my anchor, my source of joy and comfort. It has the power to heal, to motivate, and to express what cannot be said," said Maura.

Her passion for music is infectious, and her dedication to teaching is unwavering. "Every note sung, every melody played, is a step towards understanding ourselves and the world around us," she said.

Maura's influence extends to her advocacy for music as a vital component of personal growth. "Music education is not merely an academic pursuit; it's a journey of self-discovery and personal development," she explains. Through her teachings, Maura

encourages students to explore their emotions, develop their voice, and embrace their unique identity.

Maura's contributions to fostering a love for music in the hearts of learners of all ages and backgrounds is creating a legacy that will resonate for generations to come. As we celebrate Music Education Day in Saskatchewan, let's echo Maura's sentiments and advocate for the inclusion of music in every person's life.