



Antigua & Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra
c/o Government House
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St. John's, Antigua, W.I.



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ABYSO INITIAL STRING STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM SPECIAL WORKSHOP

St. John's Antigua and Barbuda - 24th February 2023: Beginner violin, viola and cello students in the Antigua and Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra (ABYSO) Initial Programme and the ABYSO Potters Primary School Satellite Programme, have, over the past two weeks, been enjoying a fun and interactive workshop with veteran music educators from the United Kingdom, cellist Wendy Max and violinist Cecily Mendelssohn.

Wendy and Cecily have been conducting workshops with the ABYSO since 2018. Not to be daunted by the global pandemic, they conducted virtual classes with the students and their tutors for two years as part of the ABYSO Virtual Academy and have maintained yearly contact with the ABYSO since first being introduced.

A frequent visitor to Antigua and Barbuda, Wendy carves out time from her holiday to voluntarily conduct these workshops. Wendy is an expert in introducing young students to string instruments. She was heavily involved in the now legendary Tower Hamlets Strings Project in London under the leadership of Sheila Nelson. Under that project, 35 peripatetic teachers taught violin and cello to 1000 children every week of the school year in large groups of 30 to 35 as part of the general curriculum. The strategies learnt there were used in her teaching work at the Royal Academy of Music and the Junior Department of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama as well as with her private students.

Speaking of her time with the children, Wendy stated, *"We have had a great time with the early learners (and their mums!). We have been establishing comfortable instrument and bow holds, while reinforcing early bowing skills and rhythm reading, using finger charts, songs and rhymes"*.

ABYSO Junior Orchestra Co-ordinator, Felicia Edwards, said: *"The workshops with Wendy and Cecily have proven to be a fun and engaging learning experience for the students. Both the students and their parents participated in the activities and showed great appreciation for it. The sessions are always filled with love, laughter and lots of smiles"*.

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Wendy has invited her colleague, Cecily, to join these workshops again. Cecily was also part of the Tower Hamlets string programme where she and Wendy met. Wendy and Cecily were ably assisted by local pianist Shannon O'Garro and ABYSO string tutors Calynia Edwards and Felicia Edwards.

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ABOUT THE ABYSO

The ABYSO is a year-round after school music programme dedicated to providing quality, accessible music education, instruments, performance and mentorship opportunities to young musicians and music educators across Antigua and Barbuda. Today, the ABYSO has its first cohort of musicians playing in its senior, junior and initial programmes. It also supports several other critical programmes to include a summer composition course, instrument maintenance and repair training and a Train the Trainers programme to build local capacity. The ABYSO is led by a voluntary Board of Directors under the distinguished patronage of Their Excellencies, Sir Rodney Williams and Lady Williams and is a 501 (c) 3 registered charity. The ABYSO embraces all of the proven mental, physical and social benefits of music education and believes that every child should experience the joys of music making.

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