

# Educational Outreach

Local arts organizations are going into classrooms and the community to enlighten young audiences.

BY KATHY LYNN GRAY

Few would argue against the importance of arts education. But for some Central Ohio students, such opportunities are few and far between.

Several local arts organizations, however, have stepped up to fill that void and provide rich, on-site experiences. From ballerinas to violinists, professional artists of all types are sharing their creativity with children through special programming.

Here are a few of the organizations that touch students' lives with art, dance, theater, opera and music.

## THE ARTMOBILE

Tobi Furman believes all kids have the right to be artists. So two years ago, the former marketing professional created The Artmobile, a program that travels to area libraries, community centers, festivals and schools to give children that opportunity.

Furman's team of artists sets up inside a building or outside under a pop-up tent, teaching up to 20 kids at a time. Projects might include drawing self-portraits, building sculptures, making rock art or assembling ice pop sticks into a unique creation.

This summer, she offered the program, which targets low-income neighborhoods, for an hour each week at several libraries. Last year, Artmobile artists taught third- and fourth-graders drawing every Wednesday during recess at Burroughs Elementary School on the Hilltop. "We go all over the city," Furman said. "Sometimes there's no other way to give this to those who really need it."

Most of her students are 5-14 years old, but this school year Furman will take the

program into at least one preschool. Part of her goal, she said, is to tie art projects to the history and diversity of each neighborhood. Artmobile charges \$200 to \$250 for its programs, which are about 75 minutes long. The cost includes supplies, setup, tables and snacks.

Furman funded the program mostly out of pocket the first year, but has since received grants, including from the city of Columbus, Greater Columbus Arts Council and Ohio Arts Council. COSI donated a 20-seat shuttle bus, which she plans to remodel into a traveling art studio. "It'll be my dream machine," she said. "It'll enrich the lives of kids."

## BALLETMET

Columbus' professional ballet company is spreading the word about the importance of dance with in-school performances and weeks-long residencies.

"We want to keep the art of ballet alive and flourishing," said Ambre Emory-Maier, BalletMet's director of education and associate director for Bal-



Jessica McAdoo (center), dean of family and community engagement at Columbus Collegiate Academy, works with students during a recent visit by The Artmobile.

PHOTO: TIM JOHNSON

letMet 2 dance academy. "We realize the benefits of the arts and dance for our community, for our creativity, our physical health and our well-being."

BalletMet's Dance in Schools initiative offers four programs, including Movement Makers, a 45-minute lecture, demonstration and question-and-answer period led by BalletMet 2 dancers for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. The session costs \$500 and is tailored to fit the age group, Emory-Maier said. "We don't just come in and put our arms over our heads and spin around," she said. "They learn some ballet history, how we create dances, and they have an opportunity to participate themselves from their seats."

Residencies, offered for preschoolers through 12th-graders, typically last eight to 12 weeks. Programs include The Wiggle Jig for ages 3-5; Moving Into Literacy for grades 1-5; and Urban Dance and Wellness for grades 9-12.

BalletMet has been involved with local schools since its in-

ception 41 years ago, and last year presented programs in 27 buildings and 49 classrooms. It offers limited grants funded by private and corporate donors, but most sites pay for the programs through school organizations, their own budget or community partners, Emory-Maier said.

BalletMet also offers Morning at the Ballet, special performances that school groups can attend at the Ohio Theatre.

## COLUMBUS CHILDREN'S THEATRE

For 48 years, the Columbus Children's Theatre touring troupe has been bringing live theater to elementary and middle schools throughout Central Ohio.

Courtney Cooke, director of theater education, said the troupe of four actors visits more than 200 schools a year to perform hourlong scripted shows and give students hands-on experiences through acting, writing, thematic and curriculum-connected workshops.

This year's shows include "Miss Electricity," "The Reluctant Dragon," "Mr. Scrooge" and "Lions in Ilyria," which is based on Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night." Program prices range from \$675 for a single performance to \$1,200 for a combination of five performances and workshops.

"We believe theater has the power to inspire, enrich and empower children, and our goal is to bring that experience to as many children as possible," Cooke said. She said that while CCT does not provide grants, it can help school administrators connect to funding sources.

The theater organization also offers discounted tickets for classes to attend daytime performances of its regular shows throughout the year; this season those include "Mary Poppins Jr.," "Dracula" and "Peter Pan."

And twice during the current school year, students in kindergarten through sixth grade can submit their stories to CCT's Child Writing Project