

OPINION

East meets western music, and takes a firm grip

The western classical canon is finding its most dedicated and gifted practitioners among children of families with Asian backgrounds

PETE McMARTIN
VANCOUVER SUN



Wednesday morning, in the Unitarian Church at Oak and West 49th Avenue, the venerable 104-year-old Vancouver Women's Musical Society presented its annual scholarship and bursary awards. Founded to further the appreciation of music in Vancouver and B.C., this year's award ceremony was, as it has been in the last few years, the scene of a cultural shift.

That shift is reflected in the names of this year's winners.

In the scholarship category,

where contestants had to perform live in front of a panel of judges, the winners were:

Timothy Chooi, of Victoria, winning a scholarship of \$3,000 for violin. Grace Takeda, of North Vancouver, winning a scholarship of \$1,000 for violin.

Joanna Tse, of Richmond, winning a scholarship of \$500 for flute.

Lucy Yu, of Burnaby, winning a scholarship of \$500 for flute.

In the bursary category, where candidates submitted resumes to continue careers in music, the winners were: Michael Unter- man, of Vancouver, a cellist who received \$1,500; Charis Cheung, of Richmond, a pianist, and Stephanie Nakagawa, of Van- couver, a soprano, both of whom received \$1,000; and Catherine Affleck, of Vancouver, a soprano,

and Da Young An, of Surrey, a pianist, both of whom were awarded \$750.

There is in that list the obvious preponderance of Asian names. And that preponderance, music teachers will tell you, is repeated in classrooms and music programs throughout the Lower Mainland. The western classical music canon is finding its most dedicated and gifted practitioners among the children of fami- lies with Asian backgrounds.

"Most of the kids who are in these competitions and winning things are mostly of Asian back- ground," said Leanne Roy, presi- dent of the VWMS, "and I think it's because they are more disci- plined. They work hard at it, not just 15 minutes or a half-hour of practice a day, but one or two hours of practice. And they don't

give up if they find it difficult."

The result, said Roy, has been a steep improvement in the level of proficiency expected of music students. Chooi and Takeda, the first- and second-prize scholar- ship winners, for example, are both only 14 years old, and they competed against older teens and early adults. Chooi was so good, Roy said, he "blew every- body away."

This year's awards were not a one-off phenomenon. From 2004 to 2008, more than half of the scholarships and bursaries the VWMS gave out went to chil- dren with Asian backgrounds. In 2008, all but one of the scholar- ships in the piano competition went to children with Asian backgrounds. In 2006, when scholarships were being given out for orchestral instruments,

six of the seven awards went to children with Asian back- grounds. There have been so many applications from families with landed immigrant status, Roy said, that the VWMS board recently decided that scholar- ships and bursaries will be made available only to those with full Canadian citizenship.

This outpouring of classical music talent isn't the result of any innate musical talent specifi- c to children of Asian descent, teachers say, but a result of cul- ture — the Asian respect for el- ders, the family's stress on a complete education and hard, hard work.

"A great number of parents [with Asian backgrounds]," said Janie Royea, the VWMS past president, "have a different take on the importance of music in

their children's lives, and they insist upon it. These students are started at a very early age with extremely good teachers and good instruments, and I think [the parents] supervise their children to the point where it be- comes a way of life."

It can take a toll, Royea said. Kids started at such a young age can burn out, or they drop music at their first taste of freedom from home.

But at the end of the day, they have a skill that gives them joy, a line that looks good on a resume and — the irony of all this — a more intimate appreciation of the culture of Bach and Beethoven than those who would call it their own.

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MULTICULTURALISM

Almost a third of UBC medical students are ESL

Four most commonly spoken first languages are Cantonese, Mandarin, Farsi and Punjabi

BY PAMELA FAYERMAN
VANCOUVER SUN

Nearly 60 per cent of first- and second-year University of B.C. medical students speak at least one other language besides English, and nearly a third speak English as a second language.

Nearly a quarter of students can speak French, but the four most common first languages are Can- tone, Mandarin, Farsi and Pun- jabi.

The medical school demo- graphics mirror that of B.C.'s gen- eral population, a quarter of which is made up of visible mi- norities, according to a survey of students.

But although nearly 60 per cent of students speak one or more languages other than English at a moderate to advanced level, only a quarter of those feel they are proficient enough to commu- nicate with patients in such lan- guages.

The vast majority believe it would be helpful or important to exploit their linguistic skills by speaking to new immigrant pa- tients in the languages they have in common, but three-quarters of those who are multilingual are reticent and uncomfortable about communicating with their future patients in languages other than English.

That's because they are being taught medical terminology in English and don't know how to

translate all the medical terms in- to other languages, according to a new study in the *B.C. Medical Journal*.

"Despite the clearly demon- strated ability and interest, a ma- jority of students who were fluent in a non-English language did not consider themselves proficient enough to communicate with a patient in that language," ac- cording to the study by students Tung Siu, Mandeep Mann, Birinder Mangat and Brock Rawstron. Their co-author and supervisor was Shafik Dharamsi, an assis- tant professor in the department of family practice.

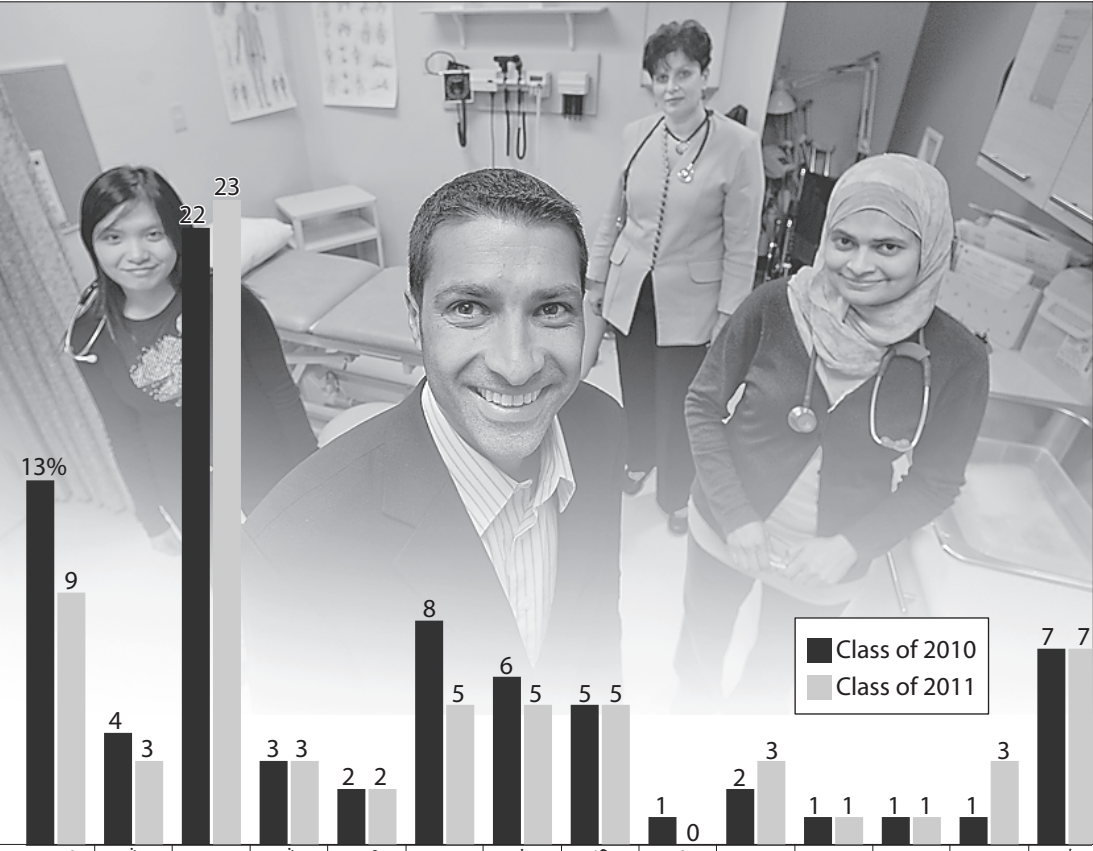
The study makes it clear that multilingual, ethnically diverse students are open to taking courses or workshops that would help them learn medical terminology in other languages so they can safely use their language skills.

"...It is clear that if cross-cul- tural and medical language skills training were included in the cur- riculum or as extracurricular ac- tivities, it would be useful and ap- preciated by the majority of stu- dents from UBC medical school," the study, based on a survey of 414 respondents, states.

The study puts into striking focus UBC's success in garnering future doctors who reflect the diversity of B.C. Dr. Gavin Stuart, dean of the medical school, said he's proud that the school's de- mographics are "well matched to the population of B.C."

Stuart said he's not surprised

Polyglot medical school



Languages, other than English, spoken by UBC medical students.

Source: B.C. Medical Journal

that students have reservations about using their other language skills.

"Learners have a certain level of

anxiety... and that may be ampli- fied if information is being put in- to another language."

Dharamsi, who was born in

Tanzania and is himself multilin- gual, said he thinks it is "quite fruitful" for future doctors to speak in other languages if it will

Despite the clearly demonstrated ability and interest, a majority of students who were fluent in a non-English language did not consider themselves proficient enough to communicate with a patient in that language.

B.C. Medical Journal study

help patients understand their medical concerns and that it will provide "culturally sensitive health care."

"I don't think we have any proof that health outcomes will be bet- ter if this happens but we know that new immigrants may seek out doctors in their own commu- nities and maybe it will serve such patients' interests better."

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CRIME

Joggers thought they were followed in Pacific Spirit Park

Park staff say RCMP decided not to advise public of complaint

BY MIKE HOWELL

A month before a runner was killed in a Vancouver park, a pair of female joggers told park staff they believed a man was following them.

Wendy Ladner-Beaudry was killed in Pacific Spirit Park, near the University of B.C. campus, on April 3.

Park manager Mitch Sokalski said staff members told the women to call police.

He said it was the RCMP's decision not to alert the public about the suspect.

"If the police ask us to post something [in the park], we will," said Sokalski. "But we're not going to just start posting things because the public has told us something. To one per-

son an incident may mean one thing, but it may mean another thing to police."

Park staff members have turned over all information related to suspicious activity requested by the RCMP in the Ladner-Beaudry homicide.

A hiker discovered the 53-year-old mother's body on a trail after she was attacked. RCMP do not yet know if the killing was random.

Sokalski said there were three patrol officers on the trails the day of Ladner-Beaudry's killing. But the officers, who work in the 809-hectare park, were not in the area when the women's body was discovered in the late afternoon.

"Staff who work in the park feel horrible for the family. It's

tragic," he said. "They take it personally because they take a lot of pride in their work and everybody does the best they can with the resources available."

About 1.7 million people visit the park every year, said Sokalski. "We believe we're doing all the right things. We've had a very good track record," he said. "We believe the park is as safe as any other urban wilderness park."

As of last week, RCMP officers had received 110 tips from the public about the slaying.

A memorial service was held on Saturday for Ladner-Beaudry, the sister of former Vancouver city councillor Peter Ladner.

Vancouver Courier

SURREY

Suspected car laptop death sparks police warning

Surrey RCMP are warning drivers to secure potentially dangerous items in their vehicles after a 25-year-old woman died last month, likely from being struck in the head by a lap-

top computer during a crash.

Heather Storey was heading out of town on business the morning of March 16 when her Volkswagen collided with a tow truck at 103 Avenue and

Scott Road.

Police say it appears she died from a head trauma caused by being struck by the laptop.

Vancouver Sun