

Maya Lin Musicians Perform Twice with Yo-Yo Ma

Six Maya Lin cellists enrolled in the Bay Area Music Project had a chance to not only meet but also perform with American cellist Yo-Yo Ma last month. Three days later they joined their fellow strings and choir ensembles to participate in a master class with him on the streets of Oakland.

The students, all 5th graders, were invited to meet Mr. Ma by organizers of the Salesforce “Dreamforce” conference, where Mr. Ma was to be interviewed by Mark Benioff, the co-CEO of Salesforce. As part of his current 36 city tour, “Six Evolutions –



Bach: Cello Suites,” Yo-Yo Ma is also connecting with young people and communities through his “Culture Connects Us” initiative. To help Mr. Ma do that here in the Bay Area, staff from Salesforce contacted the Bay Area Music Project (BAMP) – an afterschool program at Maya Lin School that is inspired by the El Sistema model of music education and aims to serve the social, emotional, cultural, and academic needs of children.

“When I got the email, I thought someone was pranking me,” said Lorrie Murray. “But it turned out to be a very real, very amazing opportunity for our kids. It’s a memory that will last a lifetime.”

The children sent in short bios so that Mr. Ma could learn about them. Charmed by the stories of the children’s pets, hobbies, love of music, and curiosity about life, Mr. Ma asked that the students perform with him, too. The mostly 2nd year cellists rose to the challenge of learning the selected piece of music in just a few weeks.

The adult chaperones had to navigate rush hour traffic, the Fremont Street closure, Salesforce security, the underground road system at the Moscone Center, and the

aboveground conference itself (including thousands of adults) to deliver the students and their cellos. But once there, the students met personally with Mr. Ma, who chatted with them briefly, rehearsed with them, and gave them some performance pointers (including how to use volume to express more emotion).

The students were treated to lunch, which was part of the Fortune Executive Summit. After Mr. Benioff interviewed Mr. Ma, he played several short pieces. Then he invited the children to join him on stage for a performance of "Simple Gifts." (Video of that performance is available [here](#).)



"Performing felt scary because there were about 1000 people in the room all watching us," says Hector, a 5th grade student in the program. "After, I felt relief and proud and happy because all my hard work paid off."

The children's time with Yo-Yo Ma didn't end there. On Saturday, forty more BAMP musicians from Advanced Choir and String Ensemble participated in a public master class in front of hundreds of people at a community cultural block party hosted by Mr. Ma and XQ Institute. "It felt great when I was playing violin on stage and I got to sit next to Yo-Yo Ma and shook his hand, said Isabel, a third grade violinist. "When I was done I felt good and sad because I did not want the moment to end."

The video of that inspiring performance can be seen [here](#).

"It was such an honor for us meet Yo-Yo Ma, and to have an opportunity to share music with him in such a heartfelt way was incredible," says Lorrie Murray, founder and executive director of the Bay Area Music Project. "It was hard not to get a little misty-eyed watching the kids play. They really worked hard for this and it showed."