

(Left to right) Oakland mayor Jean Quan, Debra Schwartz, board member, Oakland Youth Orchestra, and Robert A.D. Schwartz, president, Key Source International, visit back stage at Davies Symphony Hall following the Bay Area Youth Orchestra Festival 2011. Photograph: Conway Jones

By Conway Jones

The Oakland Youth Orchestra, together with five other Bay Area youth orchestras, came together on the stage at Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco, in a benefit concert for organizations that serve homeless youth in their respective communities.

The event was the Bay Area Youth Orchestra Festival 2011, a consortium of six youth orchestras: California Youth Symphony, Oakland Youth Orchestra, Peninsula Youth Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, Santa Rosa Symphony Youth Orchestra, and the Young People's Symphony Orchestra.

The Oakland Youth Orchestra, which is celebrating its 47th Season, was led by Bryan Nies, Principal Conductor. The orchestra played a single movement from Danzon No. 2. The composer, Arturo Márquez, was born in the Mexican state of Senora. Danzon is a ballroom dance, originally from Cuba, and was composed in 1994. The orchestra performed with energy and passion.

Oakland mayor Jean Quan and her husband Floyd Huen, MD were in attendance. Mayor Quan visited with the orchestra leaders and members of the youth orchestras back stage after the concert. "Music is such an important part of education" said mayor Quan. "I am pleased to see that so many young people in Oakland are willing to share their joy of music with the community. You give a fresh perspective on what it means to be an Oaklander". She continued.

Each participating orchestra chose an organization in its community that provides services to at-risk youth, homeless or underserved youth, to share the proceeds from the event. Oakland's Covenant House California was one of the beneficiaries. The first Bay Area Youth Orchestra Festival, held in 2009, raised around \$15,000 for its beneficiaries.

Covenant House California is a nonprofit agency whose mission is to reach out to at-risk homeless youth living on the streets and offer them hope and opportunities to turn their lives around. Since 1988, Covenant House California has impacted the lives of more than 160,000 homeless youth out of their Los Angeles and Bay Area locations.

Tom Schunn, president of the Oakland Youth Orchestra said, "The Oakland Youth Orchestra has a rich history of giving back to the community. No young musician is excluded for reasons of financial need."

For more information about the Oakland Youth Orchestra, contact Gail Edwards, orchestra manager at 510 832 7710 or visit their website at www.oyo.org.

