



Addison Independent

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Students take a break at the Lake Dunmore music camp, Point CounterPoint, in Leicester.

INDEPENDENT PHOTO/TRENT CAMPBELL

It's more than just band camp

Jenny Beck sits at a picnic table with her back to Lake Dunmore and the rising mountains on the opposite shore. A chorus of finely tuned chamber music wafts across the field where she's seated. The sweet sounds emanate from the Rec Hall off to her right.

BY **EMMA COTTON**

The music is being played by a group of talented high school students who have been refining their musical skills over the past three weeks.

"We have about 50 percent returners, so they come back year after year —" she stops mid-thought just as the lively Piano Quintet in G minor by Dmitri Shostakovich begins.

"Oh," she says, smiling. "This is my song."

Beck is the director of Point CounterPoint, a summer camp for kids ages 8 to 17 who are looking to refine their violin, piano,

cello, bass or viola skills. Founded in 1963 by Helen and Edwin Finckel — whose son, David Finckel, is now one of the most prominent cellists in the country — the camp was bought and sold by multiple couples before Beck took over in 2008.

Though Beck's love for chamber music runs deep, she's never been a musician. She stumbled upon Point CounterPoint while looking for a vacation home on Lake Dunmore.

"When I Googled it and saw that it was a chamber music camp, I thought 'Hmm, I love chamber music, I love camp and I love children,'" she says. "And so I thought, 'Maybe I could pull this off.'"

Beck's passion for music goes beyond entertainment — she believes that performing chamber music instills important traits in those who play it, especially when those players are children. While individual musicians can get lost in an orchestra, chamber music encourages singular expression.

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"When you are playing chamber music, you have a say," she says. "There's usually only one of your instrument. It's a wonderful way

to learn about life, to learn about collaborating, working with each other."

The kids make musical decisions while they play, she says. While they often practice with one of the eight teaching faculty, they are also encouraged to explore the music on their own and in groups, which promotes critical thinking and team work.

"It adds a closeness and an intimacy because you get to know those other people really well," she says. "You have to depend on the other people in the group, and so you have to hope that they've practiced and learned their parts. You end up having this commitment to the chamber group that's really very important."

And for musical decision-making inspiration, the kids have the serene backdrop of Lake Dunmore to look at. The two-acre camp is located at the water's edge, and Beck says there are more than 30 installed playing spots hidden around the grounds for kids to be alone, or together, with their instruments and sheet music.

One of the most popular spots is the "point" of Point CounterPoint. Next to the campfire, a small wooden deck stretches off a peninsula and over the water, providing a quiet and stunning view.

When they're not hard at work, the kids can be found enjoying classic camp activities. College-age counselors bring them out on the water to go boating and swimming, take them on field trips to hike, and supervise them in the camp activity buildings — each of which is named after a famous composer.

Educational and fun, Point CounterPoint might sound like a haven for any youngster looking to play music, but it's not necessarily easy to get there. The camp accepts about 45 children per session, and each camper has to audition as part of an application process.

"The hard thing with the application process is that we can't have 20 cellos, as a chamber music camp," Beck says. "You need to have the right experience level. You can't have pianists that are not able to play the same repertoire that our cellists and the violins are. So it's really

rather complicated."

But for many of the campers who are accepted, the camp becomes a second home.

Henry McEwen, an 18-year-old cellist from Newton, Mass., has been at Point CounterPoint for seven years, and came back this year as a counselor-in-training. He learned about the camp from a family friend and attended with his twin sister for the first five years. Next year, he'll be an undergraduate at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisc., as a cello performance major.

"I really fell in love with music at this camp," he said.

But McEwen says it was more than the music that drew him back year after year.

"There was this camper who I had just gotten to know," he said. "We were having our first campfire, and he said something along the lines of 'I'm just here to help people out.' That was the first truly selfless person that I'd ever met, and I found it so inspiring. I've tried to bring that to this camp."

As a counselor in training, McEwen has some chores, like laundry, but he also gets to play in the camp's concert series. The concerts are held at the

POINT COUNTERPOINT SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

Friday, August 12, 7:30 p.m.
Salisbury Congregational Church
Faculty performers

Beethoven String Quartet Op. 18 #5
Anton Webern Langsamersatz
Mozart Eb Piano Quartet K. 493

Informal public reception to meet the performers will follow the concert.

end of each session and are open to the public, though Beck says most attendees are family members and friends of the campers.

Point CounterPoint performances will start this Friday, Aug. 12, with a faculty concert at 7:30 p.m., and a second faculty concert will take place on Friday, Sept. 2. End-of-session concerts performed by the campers will be held on two Saturdays, Aug. 20 and Aug. 27, at 1 p.m.

The first three concerts — Aug. 12, 20 and 27 — will be held at the Salisbury Congregational Church, and the Sept. 2 concert will be held at the Middlebury Congregational Church.

Erin Ellis, a cello teacher at Point CounterPoint for six years, will be playing at the faculty concerts. She explains the symbolism of the camp's name.

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"(A counterpoint) is when two musical melodies imitate each other and intersect," she said. "It's a compositional technique that a lot of composers use. They'll sort of play off of each other, and so I think it's a nice allegorical connection to what we try to do here at Point CounterPoint, which is interconnecting individual lines."

Visit Point CounterPoint's website at pointcp.com to find out more about the camp and concert series.

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